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VOL. II.



PHŒBE, JUNIOR.

A Last Chronicle of Carlingsford.

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1876.

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PHŒBE, JUNIOR.

A Last Chronicle of Carlingford.



CHAPTER I.

THE NEW GENTLEMAN.

IT seems difficult to imagine what connection there could be between Phoebe Beecham's appearance in Grange Lane and the interview which took place there between her and the "new gentleman," and Mr. May's sudden onslaught upon his family, which ended in Reginald's acceptance of the chaplaincy. But yet the connection was very distinct. Not even the Mays, in their excitement over the appearance of a stranger in Carlingford, could be more

surprised than Phœbe was when her solitary walk was interrupted by the apparition across the street of a known person, a face familiar to her in other regions. "Mr. Northcote!" she cried, with a little start of surprise. As for the stranger, he made but two steps across Grange Lane in his delight at the sight of her. Not that he was Phœbe's lover, or possessed by any previous enthusiasm for the girl whom he had met about half a dozen times in his life, and of whom he knew little more than that she was the daughter of a "brother clergyman;" for both Mr. Beecham and he were in the habit of using that word, whether appropriate or inappropriate. This was the explanation of the white necktie and the formal dress which had puzzled Ursula.

Horace Northcote was not of Mr. Beecham's class. He was not well-to-do and genial, bent upon keeping up his congregation and his popularity, and trying to ignore as much as he could the social superiority of the Church without making

himself in any way offensive to her. He was a political Nonconformist, a vigorous champion of the Dis-establishment Society, more successful on the platform than in the pulpit, and strenuously of opinion in his heart of hearts that the Church was the great drawback to all progress in England, an incubus of which the nation would gladly be rid. His dress was one of the signs of his character and meaning. Strong in a sense of his own clerical position, he believed in uniform as devoutly as any Ritualist, but he would not plagiarise the Anglican livery and walk about in a modified soutane and round hat like "our brethren in the Established Church," as Mr. Beecham kindly called them. To young Northcote they were not brethren, but enemies, and though he smiled superior at the folly which stigmatised an M.B. waistcoat, yet he scorned to copy. Accordingly his frock coat was not long, but of the extremest solemnity of cut and hue, his white tie was of the stiffest, his

tall hat of the most uncompromising character. He would not veil for a day in easier and more ordinary habiliments the distinct position he assumed as clerical, yet not of the clergy, a teacher of men, though not a priest of the Anglican inspiration. He could not help feeling that his appearance, as he moved about the streets, was one which might well thrill Anglican bosoms with a flutter of terror. He was the Church's avowed enemy, and upon this he stood as his claim to the honour of those who thought with him. This was very different from the views held by the pastor of the Crescent Chapel, who was very willing to be on the best terms with the Church, and would have liked to glide into closer and closer amity, and perhaps finally to melt away altogether in her broad bosom, like a fat raindrop contributing noiselessly to swell the sea. It was not, however, any feeling of this difference which made Phœbe draw herself back instinctively after the first

start of recognition. Across her mind, even while she held out her hand to the stranger, there flashed a sudden recollection of her grandmother and her grandfather, and all the homely belongings which he, a minister of the connection, could not be kept in ignorance of. It was but a momentary pang. Phœbe was not so foolish as to shrink before the inevitable, or to attempt by foolish expedients to stave off such a danger. She shrank for a second, then drew herself up and shook off all such ignoble cares. "I am myself whatever happens," was her reflection; and she said with something like sincerity:

"I am so glad to meet you, Mr. Northcote; what an unexpected pleasure to see you here!"

"It is a most unexpected pleasure for me, I assure you," he said, "and a very great one." He spoke with unaffected honesty; for indeed his plunge into the society of Salem Chapel had given him a shock not easily got over, and the ap-

pearance of a being of his own species, among all these excellent poulterers and grocers, was a relief unspeakable; and then he added, "May I walk with you, if you are going to walk?"

"Surely," said Phœbe with momentary hesitation, and it was just at this moment that she perceived Ursula on the other side of the road, and, glad of the diversion, waved her hand to her, and said "How do you do?"

"A friend of yours?" said Mr. Northcote, following her gesture with his eyes, and feeling more and more glad that he had met her. "I passed those young ladies just now, and heard some of their conversation, which amused me. Do they belong to our people? If you will not be angry, Miss Beecham, I must say that I should be glad to meet somebody belonging to us, who is not—who is more like—the people one meets elsewhere."

"Well," said Phœbe, "we are always talking of wanting something original; I

think on the whole I am of your opinion ; still there is nothing very great or striking about most of the people one meets anywhere."

"Yes ; society is flat enough," said the young man, "But—it is strange and rather painful, though perhaps it is wrong to say so—why, I wonder, are all our people of one class ? Perhaps you have not seen much of them here ? All of one class, and that—"

"Not an attractive class," said Phœbe, with a little sigh. "Yes, I know."

"Anything but an attractive class ; not the so-called working men and such like. One can get on with them. It is very unpleasant to have to say it ; buying and selling now as we have it in Manchester does not contract the mind. I suppose we all buy and sell more and less. How is it ? When it is tea and sugar—"

"Or butter and cheese," said Phœbe with a laugh, which she could not quite keep from embarrassment. "I must be

honest and tell you before you go any further. You don't know that I belong to the Tozers, Mr. Northcote, who are in that line of business? Don't look so dreadfully distressed. Perhaps I shouldn't have told you, had you not been sure to find out. Old Mr. Tozer is my grandfather, and I am staying there. It is quite simple. Papa came to Carlingford when he was a young clergyman, newly ordained. He was pastor at Salem Chapel, and married mamma, who was the daughter of one of the chief members. I did not know myself when I came to Carlingford that they actually kept a shop, and I did not like it. Don't apologize, please. It is a very difficult question," said Phœbe philosophically, partly to ease herself, partly to set him at his ease, "what is best to do in such a case. To be educated in another sphere and brought down to this, is hard. One cannot feel the same for one's relations; and yet one's poor little bit of education, one's petty

manners, what are these to interfere with blood relationships? And to keep everybody down to the condition they were born, why, that is the old way—”

“Miss Beecham, I don’t know what to say. I never meant—I could not tell. There are excellent, most excellent people in all classes.”

“Exactly so,” said Phoebe, with a laugh. “We all know that; one man is as good as another—if not better. A butlerman is as good as a lord; but—” she added, with a little elevation of her eyebrows and shrug of her shoulders, “not so pleasant to be connected with. And you don’t say anything about my difficulty, Mr. Northcote. You don’t realize it perhaps, as I do. Which is best: for everybody to continue in the position he was born in, or for an honest shopkeeper to educate his children and push them up higher until they come to feel themselves members of a different class, and to be ashamed of him? Either way, you know, it is hard.”

Northcote was at his wits' end. He had no fellow-feeling for this difficulty. His friends were all much better off than he was as a poor minister. They were Manchester people, with two or three generations of wealth behind them, relations of whom nobody need be ashamed; and he was himself deeply humiliated and distressed to have said anything which could humiliate Phœbe, who rose immeasurably in his estimation in consequence of her bold avowal, though he himself would have sacrificed a great deal rather than put himself on the Tozer level. He did not know what to say.

“Miss Beecham, you know as well as I do, how falsely our opinions are formed in this respect, how conventional we are. What is position after all? To a grand Seigneur, for instance, the difference between his steward and his laquais seems nothing, but to the steward it is a great gulf. I—I mean—the whole question is

conventional—position, or station, or rank—”

Phœbe smiled. “I don’t think that is quite the question,” she said, “but never mind. I suppose you are here on some mission? You would not come to Carlingford for pleasure.”

“Nay,” said Northcote, with a reproachful tone. “I should have thought you must have heard of our Meeting. It is for to-night. I have come from the Dis-establishment Society with some other friends; but it is has been my fate to come on before to make the arrangements. The others come to-day.”

“A hard fate, Mr. Northcote.”

“I thought so this morning. I have not been much in the way of the country congregations. I was confounded; but, Miss Beecham, I no longer think my fate hard since I have met you. Your noble simplicity and frankness have taught me a lesson.”

“It is not noble at all,” said Phœbe,

“if I had not been sure you must find out I should have said nothing about it. Now I fear I must turn back.”

“But you will come to the Meeting,” he said, turning with her. He felt it necessary to be obsequious to Phœbe, after the terrible mistake he had made.

“Not unless grandpapa insists. I should like to hear your speech,” said Phœbe; “but I don’t object to the Established Church as you do, neither does papa when you push him hard. I don’t think England would be much nicer if we were all Dissenters. To be sure we might be more civil to each other.”

“If there were no Dissenters you mean.”

“It comes to much the same thing; congregations are not pleasant masters, are they, Mr. Northcote? I know some people—one at least,” said Phœbe, “who is often very insolent to papa; and we have to put up with it—for the sake of peace, papa says. I don’t think in the Church

that any leading member could be so insolent to a clergyman."

"That is perhaps rather—forgive me—a narrow, personal view."

"Wait till you get a charge, and have to please the congregation and the leading members!" cried Phœbe. "I know what you are thinking: it is just like a woman to look at a public question so. Very well; after all women are half the world, and their opinion is as good as another."

"I have the greatest respect for your opinion," said young Northcote; "but we must not think of individual grievances. The system, with all its wrongs, is what occupies me. I have heard something—even here—this very day—What is it, my good friend? I am busy now—another time; or if you want me my lodgings are—"

A glance, half of pain, half of fun, came into Phœbe's eyes. "It is grand-papa!" she said.

"You shouldn't speak in that tone, Sir,

not to your elders, and maybe your betters," said Tozer, in his greasy old coat. "Ministers take a deal upon them; but an old member like me, and one as has stood by the connection through thick and thin, ain't the one to be called your good friend. Well, if you begs pardon, of course there ain't no more to be said; and if you know our Phœbe—Phœbe junior, as I calls her. What of the meeting, Mr. Northcote? I hope you'll give it them Church folks 'ot and strong, sir. They do give themselves airs, to be sure, in Carlingford. Most of our folks is timid, seeing for one thing as their best customers belong to the church. That don't touch me, not nowadays," said Tozer, with a laugh, "not that I was ever one as concealed my convictions. I hope you'll give it 'em 'ot and strong."

"I shall say what I think," said the young man, bewildered. He was by no means broken into the ways of the connection, and his pride rebelled at the idea

of being schooled by this old shopkeeper ; but the sight of Phœbe standing by, not only checked his rebellious sentiments, but filled him with a sympathetic thrill of feeling. What it must be for that girl to own this old man, to live with him, and feel herself shut into his society and friends of his choosing—to hear herself spoken of as Phœbe, junior ! The idea made him shiver, and this caught old Tozer's always hospitable eye.

“ You're chilly,” he said, “ and I don't wonder after the dreadful weather we've had. Few passes my door without a bite or a sup, specially at tea-time, Mr. Nor'cote, which is sociable time, as I always says. Come in and warm yourself and have a cup of tea. There is nothing as pleases my old woman so much as to get out her best tea-things for a minister ; she 'as a great respect for ministers, has Mrs. Tozer, Sir ; and now she's got Phœbe to show off as well as the chiney. Come along, Sir, I

can't take no refusal. It's just our time for tea."

Northcote made an unavailing attempt to get away, but partly it appeared to him that to refuse the invitation might look to Phœbe like a pretence of superiority on his part, and partly he was interested in herself, and was very well aware he would get no company so good in Carlingford, even with the drawback of the old shop-people among whom she lived. How strange it was to see her in the dress of which Mrs. Sam Hurst had raved, and of which even the young Nonconformist vaguely divined the excellence, putting her daintily-gloved hand upon old Tozer's greasy sleeve, walking home with the shuffling old man, about whose social position no one could make the least mistake! He turned with them, with a sensation of thankfulness that it was in Grange Lane, Carlingford, where nobody knew him. As for Phœbe no such comfort was in her mind; everybody knew her here,

or rather, everybody knew old Tozer. No disguise was possible to her. The only way to redeem the position was to carry it with a high hand as she did, holding her head erect, and playing her part so that all the world might see and wonder. "I think you had better come, Mr. Northcote, and have some tea," she said graciously, when the awe-stricken young man was floundering in efforts to excuse himself. Old Tozer chuckled and rubbed his hands.

"Take Phœbe's advice," he said, "Phœbe's the sensiblest girl I know; so was her mother before her, as married one of the most popular preachers in the connection, though I say it as shouldn't. My old woman always said as our Phœbe was cut out for a minister's wife. And Phœbe junior's just such another," cried the admiring grandfather." Heavens above! did this mean traps and snares for himself, or did the old shopkeeper think of him, Horace Northcote, as another possible

victim? If he had but known with what sincere compassionate toleration Phœbe regarded him, as a young man whom she might be kind to, he might have been saved all alarm on this point. The idea that a small undistinguished Dissenting minister should think her capable of marrying him, was a humiliation which did not enter into Phœbe's head.

CHAPTER II.

A PUBLIC MEETING.

PHŒBE'S philosophy, however, was put to the test when, after the young pastor had taken tea and got himself away from the pressing hospitalities of the Tozers, her grandfather also disappeared to put on his best coat in order to attend the Meeting. Mrs. Tozer left alone with her granddaughter immediately proceeded to evolve her views as to what Phœbe was expected to do.

“I never see you out o’ that brown thing, Phœbe,” she said, “ain’t you got a silk dress, child, or something that looks a bit younger-looking? I’d have

thought your mother would have took more pride in you. Surely you've got a silk dress."

"Oh, yes, more than one," said Phœbe, "but this is considered in better taste."

"Taste, whose taste?" cried the old lady; "my Phœbe didn't ought to care for them dingy things, for I'm sure she never got no such example from me. I've always liked what was bright looking, if it was only a print. A nice blue silk now, or a bright green is what you'd look pretty in with your complexion. Go now, there's a dear, and put on something very nice, something as will show a bit; you're going with your grandfather to this Meeting."

"To the Meeting? oh, I hope not," said Phœbe with fervour.

"And why should you hope not? isn't it natural as a young creature like you should get out a bit when she can, and see what's to be seen? I don't hold with girls moping in a house. Besides it's very instructive, as I've always heard: and

you as is clever, of course you'll understand every word. Mr. Northcote is a nicish looking sort of young man. Ministers mayn't be much," said Mrs. Tozer, "though just see how your papa has got on, my dear. Nobody else as Phœbe could have married would have got up in the world like that; you may make a deal more money in trade, but it ain't so genteel, there's always that to be said. Now it's just as well as you should have your chance with the rest and let yourself be seen, Phœbe. Run, there's a darling and put on something bright, and a nice lace collar. You can have mine if you like. I shouldn't grudge nothing, not a single thing I've got to see you looking as nice as the best there; and so you will if you take a little pains. I'd do up my hair a bit higher if I was you; why, Phœbe, I declare! you haven't got a single pad. Now what is the use of neglecting yourself, and letting others get ahead of you like that?"

“ Pads are going out of fashion, grand-mamma,” said Phoebe gravely, “ so are bright colours for dresses. You can’t think what funny shades we wear in town. But must I go to this Meeting ? I should not like to leave you alone. It is so much nicer for me to be here.”

“ You *are* a good girl, you are,” said Mrs. Tozer admiringly, “ and me as was frightened for a fine lady from London ! But Tozer would say as it was my doing. He would say as it wasn’t natural for a young creature ; and bless you they’ll all be there in their best—that Pigeon and the others, and Mrs. Tom. I just wish I could go too, to see you outshine ’em all, which you’ll do if you take pains. Take a little more pains with your hair, Phoebe, mount it up a bit higher, and if you want anything like a bit of lace or a brooch or that, just you come to me. I should like Mrs. Tom to see you with that brooch as she’s always wanting for Minnie. Now why should I give my brooch to Minnie ?

I don't see no reason for it, for my part."

"Certainly not, grandmamma," said Phœbe, "you must wear your brooches yourself, that is what I like a great deal better than giving them either to Minnie or me."

"Ah, but there ain't a many like you, my sweet," cried the old woman wiping her eyes. "You're my Phœbe's own daughter, but you're a touch above her, my darling, and us too, that's what you are. Run now and dress, or I don't know what Tozer will say to me. He's set his heart on showing you off to-night."

Thus adjured, Phœbe went away reluctantly. It is unnecessary to say that her disinterestedness about her grandmother's brooch was not perhaps so noble as it appeared on the outside. The article in question was a kind of small warming pan in a very fine solid gold mount, set with large pink topazes, and enclosing little wavy curls of hair, one from the head of each young Tozer of the last

generation. It was a piece of jewelry very well known in Carlingford, and the panic which rose in Phœbe's bosom when it was offered for her own personal adornment is more easily imagined than described. She went upstairs feeling that she had escaped, and took out a black silk dress at which she looked longingly.

“But grandmamma would think it was no better than this,” she said to herself, and after much searchings of heart she chose a costume of Venetian blue, one soft tint dying into another like the lustre on a piece of old glass, which in her own opinion was a great deal too good for the occasion. “Some one will tread on it to a certainty, and the colours don't show in candle-light; but I must try to please grandmamma,” she said heroically. When it was put on with puffings of lace such as Mrs. Tozer had never seen, and was entirely ignorant of the value of, at the throat and sleeves, Phœbe wrapt a shawl round her in something of the same

dim gorgeous hue, covered with embroidery, an Indian rarity which somebody had bestowed upon Mrs. Beecham, and which no one had used or thought of till Phœbe's artistic eye fell upon it. It was a great deal too fine for Carlingford. An opera-cloak bought in Oxford Street for a pound or two would have much more impressed the assembly to which Phœbe was bound. Mrs. Tozer inspected her when she went downstairs, with awe, yet dissatisfaction.

"I daresay as it's all very fine, and it ain't like other folks anybody can see; but I'd dress you different, my dear, if you was in my hands," said the old woman, walking round and round her. As for Tozer, he too showed less admiration than if he had known better.

"I got a fly, thinking as you'd have some fallal or other on you; but bless my heart, you could have walked in that gown," he said. So that Phœbe's toilette, which would have been mightily admired in a

London drawing-room, could not be said to be a success. She was somewhat discouraged by this, notwithstanding that she knew so very much better; and accordingly set out in the fly with her grandfather in his best coat, feeling, generally, in a depressed condition.

“It is clear that I must take to the pinks and blues to please them,” she said to herself with a sigh. She could triumph over the slights that might be shown to herself in consequence of her relations; but those sneers at her dress went to Phœbe’s heart.

The Music Hall was full of a miscellaneous crowd when Phœbe, following her grandfather, went in and; the seats allotted to these important people were on the platform, where, at least, Tozer’s unacknowledged object of showing her off could be amply gratified. This arrangement did not, on the whole, displease Phœbe. Since she must be exhibited, it seemed better, on the whole, to be exhi-

bited there, than in a less distinguished place; and all the speakers knew her, which was something. She sat down with some complaisance, and let her Indian scarf droop from her shoulders, and her pretty dress show itself.

“I declare if that isn’t Phœbe junior,” said Mrs. Tom audibly, in the middle of the hall, “making a show of herself; but Lord bless us, for all their grandeur, how she do dress, to be sure. A bit of a rag of an old shawl, and a hat on! the same as she wears every day. I’ve got more respect for them as comes to instruct us than that.”

And, indeed, Mrs. Tom was resplendent in a red *sortie de bal*, with a brooch almost as big as that envied one of Mrs. Tozer’s stuck into her gown, and a cap covered with flowers upon her head. This was the usual fashion of the Salem ladies on such rare occasions. The meeting of the Dis-establishment Society was to them what a ball is to worldly-minded persons who

frequent such vanities. The leading families came out *en masse* to see and to be seen. It would be wrong to say that they did not enter into all the arguments and recognise the intellectual feast set before them; no doubt they did this just as well as if they had come in their commonest attire; but still the seriousness of the occasion was, no doubt, modified by being thus made into a dissipation. The men were not so fine, perhaps because it is more difficult for men to be fine—but they were all in their Sunday clothes; and the younger ones were in full bloom of coloured satin cravats and fine waistcoats. Some of them were almost as fine a sight as the ladies in their ribbons and flowers.

“I suppose by the look of them this must be an influential community—people of some pretensions,” said an opaque elderly minister, who had seated himself by Phœbe, and whose eyes were dazzled by the display. “I never expected all this dress in a quiet country place.”

“ Oh, yes! they are people of much pretension,” said Phœbe gravely.

And then the proceedings began. Old Mr. Green, the grocer, whose son had married Maria Pigeon, and who had long been retired from business, occupying a house in the country and “ driving his carriage,” was in the chair; and the proceedings went on according to the routine of such assemblies, with differing degrees of earnestness on the part of the speakers. To most of these gentlemen it was the ordinary occupation of their lives; and they made their hearers laugh at well-known stories, and enjoyed their own wit, and elicited familiar cheers, and made hits such as they had made for years on the same subject, which was a comfortable *cheval de bataille*, not at all exciting to themselves, though they were quite willing to excite their audience, if that audience would allow itself to be excited. Things jogged on thus for the first hour very pleasantly; the Meeting was not excited,

but it was amused and enjoyed itself. It was an intellectual treat, as Pigeon said to Brown, and if the younger people did not like it so well as they would have liked a ball, the elder people liked it a great deal better, and the hall rang with applause and with laughter as one speaker succeeded another. It was pleasant to know how unstable "the Church" was on her foundation; that aristocratical Church which looked down upon Dissent, and of which the poorest adherent gave himself airs much above Chapel folks; and how much loftier a position the Nonconformist held, who would have nothing to say to State support.

"For my part," said one of the speakers, "I would rather abandon my sacred calling to-morrow, or make tents as St. Paul did in its exercise, than put on the gilded fetters of the State, and pray or preach as an Archbishop told me; nay, as a Cabinet Council of godless worldlings directed. There are many good men

among the clergy of the Church of England; but they are slaves, my friends, nothing but slaves, dragged at the chariot wheels of the State; ruled by a caste of hard-headed lawyers; or binding themselves in the rotten robes of tradition. It is we only who can dare to say that we are free !”

At this sentiment, the Meeting fairly shouted with applause and delight and self-complacency; and the speaker, delighted too, and tasting all the sweetness of success, gave place to the next, and came and sat down by Phœbe, to whose society the younger men were all very glad to escape.

“ Miss Beecham, you are fashionably calm,” whispered the orator, “ you don’t throw yourself, like the rest of us, into this great agitation.”

“ Have you a leading member ?” whispered Phœbe back again; “ and does he never drag you at his chariot wheels? Have you deacons that keep you up to the

mark? Have you people you must drink tea with when they ask you, or else they throw up their sittings? I am thinking, of course, of papa."

"Have I deacons? Have I leading members? Miss Beecham, you are cruel—"

"Hush!" said Phœbe, settling herself in her chair. "Here is somebody who is in dreadful earnest. Don't talk, Mr. Northcote is going to speak."

Thus it will be seen that the Minister's daughter played her rôle of fine lady and *bel esprit* very fairly in an atmosphere so unlike the air that fine ladies breathe. Phœbe paid no more attention to the discomfited man at her elbow. She gathered up her shawl in her hand with a seeming careless movement, and let it drop lightly across her knee, where the gold threads in the embroidery caught the light; and she took off her hat, which she had thought proper to wear to show her sense that the Meeting was not an evening party; and prepared herself to listen. Her com-

plexion and her hair, and the gold threads in the rich Indian work, thus blazed out together upon the startled audience. Many of them were as much struck by this as by the beginning of Mr. Northcote's speech, though it was very different from the other speeches. The others had been routine agitation, this was fiery conviction, crude and jumping at conclusions, but still an enthusiasm in its way. Mr. Northcote approached his subject gradually, and his hearers, at first disappointed by the absence of their familiar watch-words were dull, and bestowed their attention on Phœbe; but before he had been speaking ten minutes Phœbe was forgotten even by her uncle and aunt, the two people most interested in her. It would be dangerous to repeat to a reader, probably quite uninterested in the controversy, Mr. Northcote's speech, in which he laid hold of some of those weak points which the Church of course has in common with every other institution in the world. Elo-

quence has a way of evaporating in print, even when the report is immediate. But his peroration was one which startled his hearers out of a calm abstract interest to all that keen personal feeling which accompanies the narrative of facts known to an audience, and affecting people within their own locality.

“I have only been in this place three days,” said the speaker, “but in that short time I have heard of one of the most flagrant abuses which I have been indicating to you. There is in this town, as you all know, an institution called the College ; what was its original object I do not know. Nests of idle pauperism, genteely veiled under such a name, do exist, I know, over all the country ; but it is at least probable that some educational purpose was in the mind of the pious founder who established it. The pious founder ! how immense are the revenues, how incalculable the means of doing good, which have been locked up in uselessness,

or worse than uselessness, by men who have purchased a pass into the kingdom of heaven at the last moment by such gifts, and become pious founders just before they ceased to be miserable sinners ! Whatever may have been the original intention of the College, however, it is clear that it was meant for something more than the pitiful use it is put to now. This old foundation, ladies and gentlemen, which might provide half the poor children in Carlingford with a wholesome education, is devoted to the maintenance of six old men, need I say Churchmen" (here the speaker was interrupted by mingled hisses and ironical 'hear, hears')—"and a chaplain to say their prayers for them. Six old men : and one able-bodied parson to say their prayers for them. What do you think of this, my friends ? I understand that this heavy and onerous duty has been offered—not to some other mouldy old gentleman, some decayed clergyman who might have ministered in peace to the decayed old

burghers without any interference on my part : for a refuge for the aged and destitute has something natural in it, even when it is a wrong appropriation of public money. No, this would have been some faint approach perhaps to justice, some right in wrong that would have closed our mouths. But no ! it is given to a young gentleman, able-bodied, as I have said, who has appeared more than once in the cricket-field with your victorious Eleven, who is fresh from Oxford, and would no more condescend to consider himself on a footing of equality with the humble person who addresses you, than I would, having the use of my hands, accept a disgraceful sinecure ! Yes, my friends, this is what the State Church does. She so crows the spirit and weakens the hearts of her followers that a young man at the very beginning of his career, able to teach, able to work, able to dig, educated and trained and cultured, can stoop to accept a good income in such a position as this. Think of it ! Six old

men, able surely, if they are good for anything, to mumble their prayers for themselves somehow: yet provided with an Oxford scholar, an able-bodied young man to read the service for them daily! He thinks it very fine, no doubt, a good income and a good house for life, and nothing to do but to canter over morning and evening prayer at a swinging pace, as we have all heard it done: morning prayer, let us see, half an hour—or you may throw in ten minutes, in case the six should mumble their Amens slowly—and twenty minutes for the evening, one hour a day. Here it is under your very eyes, people of Carlingford, a charming provision for the son of one of your most respected clergymen. Why, it is in your newspaper, where I read it! Can I give a more forcible instance of the way in which a State Church cuts honesty and honour out of men's hearts."

A great many people noticed that when Mr. Northcote ended this with a

thundering voice, some one who had been listening near the door in an Inverness cape, and hat over his brows, gave himself a sudden impetuous shake which shook the crowd, and turning round made his way out, not caring whom he stumbled against. The whole assembly was in a hubbub when the orator ceased, and whispers ran freely round among all the groups in the front. "That's young May he means." "In course it's young May. Infernal job, as I've always said." "Oh hush, Pigeon, don't swear! but it do seem a black burning shame, don't it?" "Bravo, Mr. Nor'cote!" called out old Tozer, on the platform, "that's what I call giving forth no uncertain sound. That's laying it into them 'ot and 'ot,"

This was the climax of the Meeting. Everything else was flat after such a decided appeal to personal knowledge. Phœbe alone gave a frigid reception to the hero of the evening.

"I dislike personalities," she said,

pointedly. "They never do a cause any good; and it isn't gentlemanly; don't you think so, Mr. Sloely;" and she turned away from Northcote, who had come to speak to her, and devoted herself to the man at her elbow, whom she had snubbed a little while before. He said to himself that this was untrue, and brought up a hundred very good reasons why he should have employed such an example, but the reproof stung him to the quick, for to be ungentlemanly was the reproach of all others most calculated to go to his heart.

But nobody knew how Mr. May went home in his Inverness coat, breathing fire and flame, nor of the execution he did thereupon.

CHAPTER III.

MR. MAY'S AFFAIRS.

MR. MAY went into his study and closed the door. He poked the fire—he put himself into his easy-chair—he drew his writing-book towards him, and opened it at where a half-written sheet lay waiting. And then he paused, rubbed his hands softly together, and falling back again, laughed quietly to himself.

Yes; he who had stormed out of the drawing-room like a whirlwind, having discomfited everybody, leaving the girls in tears, and the boys in white heat of passion, when he reached the profoundest depths of his own retirement, laughed.

What did it mean? Of all the people in the world, his children would have been most entirely thunderstruck by this self-betrayal. They could not have understood it. They were acquainted with his passions, and with his moments of good temper. They knew when he was amiable, and when he was angry, by instinct, by the gleam of his eye, by the way in which he shut the door; but this was something totally unknown to them. The truth was that Mr. May, like many other people, having a naturally bad temper, which he indulged freely when he pleased, had attained the power of using it when it suited him to use it, without being suspected by anybody. A bad temper is a possession like another, and may be made skilful use of like other things which, perhaps, in themselves, are not desirable. He could work himself up into fury, and launch the doom he felt disposed to launch, like a burning and fizzing thunder-bolt from a hand which was, in reality,

not at all excited; and like most other people who possess such an unrevealed power, it pleased him very much when he persuaded his surroundings that it was an impulse of rage which moved him. He had been at the Meeting at the Music Hall, "to hear what those fellows had to say for themselves." Contempt, unbounded but wrathful, was the feeling in his mind towards "those fellows;" but he felt that young Northcote's eloquence, reported in next day's papers, was quite enough to quash for ever all hopes of his son's acceptance of the chaplaincy. So he walked home as fast as his legs would carry him, and burst into his house, as we have seen, with a semblance of passion so perfect as to deceive his entire family and fill the place with anger and tears. Upon which, withdrawing from the scene of conflict, he threw himself down in his easy-chair and chuckled, recovering his composure by slow degrees.

When, however, this private indulgence was over, Mr. May's face grew dark enough. He pushed his writing away from him, and pulling out a drawer in his writing-table which was full of papers of a very unliterary aspect, betook himself to the consideration of them, with anything but laughter in his looks, or in his mind. Letters upon blue paper in straight up and down handwriting—other papers, also blue, with ruled lines and numerals, for which Mr. May was more frightened than he would have been for a charge of cavalry. These were the very unattractive contents of this drawer. He brought two or three of them out in a bundle and read them over, one after another, with contracted brows. Debt is an idiosyncrasy like other things. Some people keep clear of it miraculously, some seem to drop into it without cause or meaning, and to spend all their lives afterwards in vain attempts to get out. Mr. May was one of these unfortunate men. He could

not tell himself where his money went to. Poor man ! it was not so much he had, and there was a large family to be fed and clothed, and schooled after a sort. But still other people on incomes as small as his had managed to maintain their families without dropping into this hopeless condition. He had been in debt since ever he could remember ; and to be sure it was not the pain and trouble to him that it is to many people. So long as, by hook or by crook, he could manage to stave off the evil day, so long was he happy enough, and he had managed this by all sorts of semi-miraculous windfalls up to the present time. James's remittances had been like heavenly dew to him. It is true that these remittances had been intended to keep Reginald at Oxford, and perhaps something of the special hardness with which he regarded Reginald arose from the fact that he had done him wrong in this respect, and had appropriated what was intended for him. But after all, he

had said to himself, the maintenance of the house in comfort, the keeping clean of the family name, and staving off disagreeable revelations of the family's poverty, was more, for even Reginald's comfort, than a little more money in his pocket which every body knew was very dangerous for a young man.

Mr. May had always a bill coming due which James's remittances arrived just in time to meet. Indeed, this was the normal condition of his life. He had always a bill coming due—a bill which some good-humoured banker had to be coaxed into renewing, or which was paid at the last moment by some skilful legerdemain in the way of pouring out of one vessel into another, transferring the debt from one quarter to another, so that there may have been said to be always a certain amount of quite fictitious and visionary money floating about Mr. May, money which existed only in the shape of symbol, and which, indeed, belonged to nobody—

which was borrowed here to day, and paid there to-morrow, to be re-borrowed and re-paid in the same way, never really reaching anybody's pocket, or representing anything but that one thing which money is supposed to be able to extinguish—debt. When human affairs reach this very delicate point, and there is nothing at any moment, except a semi-miraculous windfall, to keep a man going, the crisis is very serious. And it was no wonder that Mr. May was anxious to drive his son into accepting any possible appointment, and that he occasionally railed unreasonably at his family. Unless a hundred pounds or so fell down from the skies within the next ten days, he saw nothing before him but ruin. This, it is needless to say, is very far from being a comfortable position. The *sourde* agitation, excitement, feverish hope and fear of the sufferer might well affect his temper. If he could not get a hundred

pounds within ten days, he did not know what he was to do.

And nobody could say (he thought to himself) that he was an expensive man; he had no expensive habits. He liked good living, it is true, and a glass of good wine, but this amount of regard for the table does not ruin men. He liked books also, but he did not buy them, contenting himself with such as the library could afford, and those which he could obtain by the reviews he wrote for the Church Magazines. How then was it that he never could get rid of that rapidly maturing bill? He could not tell. Keeping out of debt is one thing, and getting rid of it when you have once taken its yoke upon your neck is another. His money, when he had any, "slipped through his fingers," as people say. When James's remittance or any other piece of good fortune gave him enough to pay that hundred pounds without borrowing elsewhere, he borrowed elsewhere all the same. It was a mysteri-

ous fatality, from which he seemed unable to escape. In such circumstances a crisis must come sooner or later, and it appeared to him that now at least, after many hair-breadth escapes, the crisis had come.

What was he to do? There was no chance, alas! of money from James, and even if Reginald accepted the chaplaincy, and was willing at once to come to his father's aid, there was no hope that he would have anything for some time—for chaplains' incomes are not, any more than other people's, generally paid in advance. He leaned back in his chair and went over again, for the hundredth time, the list of all the people he could borrow from, or who would "back" a bill for him, and he was still employed in this melancholy and hopeless enumeration, when a low knock came to the door, and a maid-of-all-work, pushing it open, thrust in a homely little man in a dusty-brown coat, who put up a hand to his forehead as he came in with a salutation which was half charity school-

boy, half awkward recruit. Beyond this there was no ceremony about his entrance, no leave asked or question made. Betsy knew very well that he was to come in when he pleased, and that her master did not deny himself to Cotsdean. Mr. May received him with a familiar nod, and pointed hastily to a chair. He did not even take the trouble to put away those blue papers, which he would have done if any other individual, even if one of his children had come into the room.

"Good evening, Cotsdean," he said, in a friendly tone. "Well, what news?"

"Nothing as is pleasant, Sir," said the man, sitting down on a corner of his chair. "I've been to the bank, and it's no use my explaining, or begging ever so hard. They won't hear of it. 'We've done it times and times,' they says to me, 'and we won't do it no more. That's flat,' and so indeed it is flat, Sir, as you may say downright Dunstable; but that ain't no advantage to you and me."

“Yes it is, Cotsdean,” said the clergyman, “it is a decided advantage, for it shows there is nothing to be hoped for from that quarter, and that is always good—even though it’s bad bad, as bad as can be—”

“You may say so, Sir,” said Cotsdean. “I don’t know what’s to be done no more than the babe unborn, and it’s wearing me to death, that’s what it’s doing. When I looks round on my small family, it’s all I can do not to cry out loud. What’s to become of my children, Mr. May? Yours, Sir, they’ll never want friends, and a hundred or so here or there, that don’t ruin gentlefolks; but without selling up the business, how am I ever to get a hundred pounds? It ain’t equal, Sir, I swear it ain’t. You gets the money, and you takes it easy, and don’t hold your head not a bit lower; but me as has no good of it (except in the way o’ a bit of custom that is a deal more in looks than anything else), and has to go round to all the folks,

to Mr. Brownlow, at the bank, and I don't know who, as if it was for me ! I suffers in my credit, Sir, and I suffers in my spirits, and I suffers in my health ; and when the smash comes, what's to become o' my poor children ? It's enough to put a man beside himself, that's what it is."

Here the poor man's eyes grew blood-shot, partly with rubbing them, partly with tears. He rubbed them with the sleeve of his rough coat, and the tears were very real, though few in quantity. Cotsdean's despair was indeed tragical enough, but its outside had in it a dash of comedy which, though he was in no mirthful mood, caught the quick eye of Mr. May. He was himself very painfully affected, to tell the truth, but yet it cost him an effort not to smile.

"Cotsdean," he said, "have I ever failed you yet ? You have done a good deal for me, I don't deny it—you have had all the trouble, but beyond that what have you suffered except in imagination ? If

you choose to exaggerate dangers, it is not my fault. Your children are as safe as—as safe as the Bank of England. Now have I ever failed you? answer me that.”

“I can’t say as you have, Sir,” said Cotsdean, “but it’s dreadful work playing with a man’s ruin, off and on like this, and nobody knowing what might happen, or what a day or an hour might bring forth.”

“That is very true,” said Mr. May. “I might die, that is what you mean; very true, though not quite so kind as I might have expected from an old friend—a very old friend.”

“I am sure, Sir, I beg your pardon,” cried the poor man, “it wasn’t that; but only just as I’m driven out o’ my seven senses with thinking and thinking.”

“My dear Cotsdean, don’t think; there could not be a more unnecessary exercise; what good does your thinking do, but to make you unhappy? leave that to me. We have been driven into a corner before

now, but nothing has ever happened to us. You will see something will turn up this time. I ask you again, have I ever failed you? you know best."

"No, Sir;" said Cotsdean, somewhat doubtfully. "No, I didn't say as you had. It's only—I suppose I ain't so young as I once was—and a man's feelins, Sir, ain't always in his own control."

"You must take care that it is only to me that you make such an exhibition as this," said Mr. May. "Who is there? oh, my coffee! put it on the table. If you are seen coming here to me with red eyes and this agitated appearance," he went on, waiting pointedly till the door was closed, "it will be supposed there is some family reason for it—again—"

"Oh, lor, Sir! you know—"

"Yes, I know very well," said the clergyman. "I know that there couldn't be a better wife, and that bygones are bygones; but you must remember and take care; everybody doesn't know you—"

and her—so well as I do. When you come to see your clergyman in this agitated state, I put it to yourself, Cotsdean, I put it to your good sense, what is anybody to think? You must take great care not to betray yourself to anybody but me.”

The man looked at him with a half-gasp of consternation, bewildered by the very boldness with which he was thus set down. Betray himself—he drew a long breath, as if he had received a *douche* of cold water in his face, which was indeed very much like the effect which this extraordinary address produced—betray himself! Poor Cotsdean’s struggles and sufferings arose, at the present moment, entirely from the fact that he had allowed himself to be made use of for Mr. May’s occasions, and both the men were perfectly aware of this. But though he gasped, Cotsdean was too much under the influence of his clergyman to do anything more. Had he been a Dissenter, he would have patronized young

Northcote, who was as good a man as Mr. May (or far better if truth were told) with the frankest certainty of his own superior position, but being a humble churchman he yielded to his clergyman as to one of the powers that be. It is a curious difference. He sat still on the edge of his chair, while Mr. May walked across the room to the table by the door, where his *café noir* had been placed, and took his cup and drank it. He was not civil enough to ask his visitor to share it, indeed it never would have occurred to him, though he did not hesitate to use poor Cotsdean for his own purpose, to treat him otherwise than as men treat their servants and inferiors. When he had finished his coffee, he went leisurely back into his former place.

“You have nothing to suggest,” he said, “nothing to advise? Well, I must try what I can do. It will be hard work, but still I must do it, you know,” added Mr. May, in a gracious tone. “I have

never concealed from you, Cotsdean, how much I appreciated your assistance ; everything of this sort is so much worse in my position than in yours. You understand that ? A gentleman—and a clergyman—has things expected from him which never would be thought of in your case. I have never omitted to acknowledge my obligations to you—and you also owe some obligations to me.”

“ I don’t deny as you’ve been very kind, Sir,” said Cotsdean, half-grateful, half-sullen ; then he wavered a little. “ I never denied it, *her* and me could never have ’it it off but for you. I don’t forget a favour—nobody can say that of me. I ain’t forgot it in this case.”

“ I don’t say that you have forgotten it. I have always put the utmost confidence in you ; but, my good fellow, you must not come to me in this down-in-the-mouth way. Have I ever failed you ? We’ve been hard pressed enough at times, but something has always turned up. Have

not I told you a hundred times Providence will provide ?”

“If you put it like that, Sir—”

“I do put it like that. I have always been helped, you know, sometimes when it seemed the last moment. Leave it to me. I have no more doubt,” said Mr. May, lifting up a countenance which was by no means so untroubled as could have been wished, “that when the time comes all will be well, than I have of the sun rising to-morrow—which it will,” he added with some solemnity, “whether you and I live to see it or not. Leave it all, I say, to me.”

Cotsdean did not make any reply. He was overawed by this solemnity of tone, and knew his place too well to set himself up against his clergyman; but still it cannot be denied that the decision was less satisfactory than one of much less exalted tone might have been. He had not the courage to say anything—he withdrew with his hat in his hand, and a cloud

over his face. But as he left the house the doubt in his soul breathed itself forth. "If so be as neither me nor him see it rise, what good will that do to my family," said Cotsdean to himself, and went his way to his closed shop, through all the sacks of seeds and dry rustling grain with a heavy heart. He was a cornfactor in a tolerable business, which, as most of the bankers of Carlingford knew, he had some difficulty in carrying along, being generally in want of money; but this was not so rare a circumstance that any special notice should be taken of it. Everybody who knew thought it was very kind of Mr. May to back him up as he did, and even to put his name to bills for poor Cotsdean, to whom, indeed, he was known to have been very kind in many ways. But nobody was aware how little of these said bills went to Cotsdean, and how much to Mr. May.

When he was gone, the clergyman threw himself back again into his chair

with a pale face. Providence, which he treated like some sort of neuter deity, and was so very sure of having on his side when he spoke to Cotsdean, did not feel so near to him, or so much under his command when Cotsdean was gone. There were still two days ; but if before that he could not make some provision, what was to be done ? He was not a cruel or bad man, and would have suffered keenly had anything happened to poor Cotsdean and his family on his account. But they must be sacrificed if it came to that, and the thought was very appalling. What was he to do ? His friends were exhausted, and so were his expedients. There was no longer anyone he could borrow from, or who would take even a share of his burden on their shoulders. What was he to do ?

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW CHAPLAIN.

IT cannot be denied that, reluctant as Reginald May had been to accept the chaplaincy of which so much had been said, he had no sooner fairly done so, and committed himself beyond remedy, than a certain sense of relief began to steal over the young man's mind. He had made the leap. Moved, at last, by arguments which, perhaps, were not worth very much logically, and which even while he yielded to them he saw the weakness of, he felt sure that when he woke in the morning, and realized what he had done,

fearful feelings of remorse would seize him. But, curiously enough, this was not so; and his first sensation was relief that the conflict was over, and that he had no more angry remonstrances to meet with, or soft pleadings from Ursula, or assaults of rude abruptness from Janey. All that was over; and then a warm glow of independence and competency came over the young man. You may be sure he had no fire in his rooms to make him warm, and it was a chill January morning, with snow in the heavy sky, and fog in the yellow air; but, notwithstanding, there came a glow of comfort over him.

Independent! and with an income, without which independence is a mockery—free to go where he pleased, buy what he liked, spend his time as best seemed to him, with a “position” of his own, even a house of his own. He laughed softly to himself at this new idea. It did not somehow hurt him as he thought it would, this sinecure he had accepted. Could he

not make it up, as Ursula said, "work for the town in other ways without pay, since the town had given him pay without work." A genial feeling of toleration came over Reginald's mind. Why should he have made such a fuss about it? It was natural that his father should insist, and, now that it was done, he himself did not wish it undone, as he had expected to do. After all, if you judged matters with such rigidity, who was there without guilt? what public appointment was given and held according to abstract right, as, formally speaking, it ought to be? Those in the highest offices were appointed, not because of their personal excellence, but because of being some other man's son or brother; and yet, on the whole, public duty was well done, and the unjust ruler and hireling priest were exceptions. Even men whose entry into the fold was very precipitate, over the wall, violently, or by some rat-hole of private interest, made very good shep-

herds, once they were inside. Nothing was perfect in this world, and yet things were more good than evil; and if he himself made it his study to create for himself an ideal position, to become a doer of all kinds of volunteer work, what would it matter that his appointment was not an ideal appointment? It seemed very strange to him, and almost like an interposition of Providence in his favour, that he should feel in this way, for Reginald was not aware that such revulsions of feeling were very natural phenomena, and that the sensation, after any great decision, is almost invariably one of relief. To be sure it upset this manly state of mind a little when coming down to breakfast, his father gave him a nod, and said briefly, "I am glad you have seen your duty at last."

This made him almost resolve to throw it up again; but the feeling was momentary. Why should he give it up? It had made him independent (already he thought

of his independence as a thing accomplished), and he would make full amends to the Church and to Carlingford for taking two hundred and fifty pounds a year without working for it. Surely he could do that. He did not grudge work, but rather liked it, and would be ready to do anything, he did not care what, to make his sinecure into a volunteer's outpost for every good work. Yes, that was the way to look at it. And it was a glorious independence. Two hundred and fifty pounds a year!

"And the house," cried Ursula, when Mr. May had left the breakfast table, and left them free to chatter. "The house—I don't think you are likely to find a tenant for it. The houses in Grange Lane are so cheap now; and some people object to the poor old men. I think you must keep the house. Furnishing will be an expense; but, of course, when you have a certain income, that makes such a differ-

ence; and you can come and see us every day."

"Why can't he live at home?" said Janey, "we are so poor; he ought to come and pay us something for his board, and help us to get on."

"What can you know about it, at your age?" said Ursula. "We have not got proper rooms for Reginald. He ought, at least, to have a study of his own, as well as a bed-room, now that he has an appointment. No, you must go to the College, Reginald; and, perhaps, you might have one of the boys with you, say Johnnie, which would be a great saving—for he has an appetite; he eats more than two of the rest of us do. You might take one of them with you—to save the bills a little—if you like."

"Take me," said Janey, "I have a good appetite too; and then I'm a girl, which is a great deal more useful. I could keep your house. Oh, Reginald! mayn't we go out and see it? I want to see it."

I have never once been over the College—not in all my life.”

“We might as well go, don’t you think, Ursula?” he said, appealing to her with a delightful mixture of helplessness and supremacy. Yesterday, he had not been able to assert any exclusive claim to sixpence. Now he had a house—a house all his own. It pleased him to think of taking the girls to it; and as for having one of them, he was ready to have them all to live with him. Ursula thought fit to accede graciously to this suggestion, when she had looked after her numerous household duties. Janey, in the meantime, had been “practising” in one of her periodical fits of diligence.

“For, you know, if Reginald did really want me to keep house for him,” said Janey, “(you have too much to do at home; or, of course, he would like you best), it would be dreadful if people found out how little I know.”

“You ought to go to school,” said

Ursula, gravely. "It is a dreadful thing for a girl never to have had any education. Perhaps Reggy might spare a little money to send you to school; or, perhaps, papa—"

"School yourself!" retorted Janey indignant; but then she thought better of it. "Perhaps just for a year to finish," she added in a doubtful tone. They thought Reginald could do anything on that wonderful two hundred and fifty pounds a year.

The College was a picturesque old building at the other side of Carlingford, standing in pretty grounds with some fine trees, under which the old men sat and amused themselves in the summer mornings. On this chilly wintry day, none of them were visible, except the cheerful old soul bent almost double, but with a chirruppy little voice like a superannuated sparrow, who acted as porter, and closed the big gates every night, and fined the old men twopence if they were too late.

He trotted along the echoing passages, with his keys jingling, to show them the chaplain's rooms.

“The old gentlemen is all as pleased as Punch,” said Joe. “We was a-feared as it might be somebody fureign—not a Carlingford gentleman; and some parsons is queer, saving your presence, Mr. May; but we knows where you comes from, and all about you, as one of the old gentlemen was just a-saying to me. Furnished, Miss? Lord bless you, yes! they're furnished. It's all furnished is College. You'll think as the things look a bit queer; they wasn't made not this year, nor yet last year, I can tell you; and they ain't in the fashion. But if so be as you don't stand by fashion, there they is,” said Joe, throwing open the door.

The young people went in softly, their excitement subdued into a kind of awe. An empty house, furnished, is more desolate, more overwhelming to the imagina-

tion, than a house which is bare. For whom was it waiting, all ready there, swept and garnished? Or were there already unseen inhabitants about, writing ghostly letters on the tables, seated on the chairs? Even Janey was hushed.

“I’d rather stay at home, after all,” she whispered in Ursula’s ear under her breath.

But after awhile they became familiar with the silent place, and awoke the echoes in it with their voices and new life. Nothing so young had been in the College for years. The last chaplain had been an old man and an old bachelor; and the pensioners were all solitary, living a sort of monastic life, each in his room, like workers in their cells. When Janey, surprised by some unexpected joke, burst into one of her peals of laughter, the old building echoed all through it, and more than one window was put up and head projected to know the cause of this profanation.

“ Joe ! ” cried one portentous voice ;
“ what’s happened ? what’s the meaning
of this . ”

“ It’s only them a-laughing, Sir , ” said Joe, delighting in the vagueness of his rejoinder. “ They ain’t used to it, that’s the truth ; but laugh away Miss, it’ll do you good , ” he added benignly. Joe was of a cheerful spirit, notwithstanding his infirmities, and he foresaw lightsome days.

Somewhat taken aback, however, by the commotion produced by Janey’s laugh, the young party left the College, Ursula carrying with her sundry memoranda and measurements for curtains and carpets. “ You must have curtains , ” she said, “ and I think a carpet for the study. The other room will do ; but the study is cold, it has not the sunshine. I wonder if we might go and look at some, all at once . ”

Here the three paused in the road, and looked at each other somewhat overcome

by the grandeur of the idea. Even Reginald, notwithstanding his Oxford experience, held his breath a little at the thought of going right off without further consideration, and buying carpets and curtains. As for Janey, she laughed again in pure excitement and delight.

“Fancy going into Holden’s, walking right in, as if we had the Bank in our pockets, and ordering whatever we like,” she cried.

“I suppose we must have them!” said Reginald, yielding slowly to the pleasure of acquisition. Ursula was transformed by the instinct of business and management into the leader of the party.

“Of course you must have them,” she said, with the air of a woman who had ordered curtains all her life, “otherwise you will catch cold, and that is not desirable,” and she marched calmly towards Holden’s, while Janey dropped behind to smother the laughter which expressed her amazed delight in this new situation. It

is doubtful whether Holden would have given them so good a reception had the Miss Mays gone to him to order curtains for the Parsonage—for the Carlingford tradesmen were very well aware of the difficulties, in point of payment, which attended Mr. May's purchases. But Holden was all smiles at the idea of fitting up the rooms in the College.

“ Carpets ? I have a Turkey carpet that would just suit one of those old rooms—old-fashioned rooms are so much thought of at present,” said the man of furniture.

“ Yes—I suppose that would do,” said Reginald, with a side look at his sister, to know if he was right. Ursula slew him with a glance of her brown eyes. She was almost grand in superior knowledge and righteous indignation.

“ Turkey ! are you out of your senses ? Do you think we have the Bank in our pockets,” she whispered to him angrily, “ as Janey says ?”

“ How was I to know ? He said so,”

said the alarmed chaplain, cowed, notwithstanding his income.

“ *He* said so ! that is just like you boys, taking whatever everyone tells you. Why, a Turkey carpet costs a fortune. Mr. Holden, I think, if you please, Brussels will do ; or some of those new kinds, a jumble of colours without any decided pattern. Not too expensive,” said Ursula solemnly, the colour mounting to her face. They were all rather brought down from their first delight and grandeur when this was said—for stipulating about expense made a difference all at once. The delightful sensation of marching into Holden’s as if the world belonged to them was over ; but Janey was touched to see that Holden still remained civil, and did not express, in his countenance, the contempt he must have felt.

When this was over, and Mr. Holden had kindly suggested the idea of sending various stuffs to the College, “ that they might judge of the effect,” the party went

home, slightly subdued. The air was heavy and yellow, and prophesied snow; but a very red wintry sun had managed to make an opening temporarily in the clouds, and threw a ruddy ray down Grange Lane, bringing out the few passengers who were coming and going under the old garden walls. Ursula clasped her hands together, and came to a stop suddenly, when she turned her eyes that way.

“ Oh !” she said, “ here she is—she is coming ! all by herself, and we can’t help meeting her—the young lady in black !”

“ Shall you speak to her ?” said Janey with a little awe.

“ Who is the young lady in black ?” said Reginald, “ this girl who is coming up ? I never saw her before in Carlingford. Is she some one you have met with the Dorsets ? She don’t look much like Grange Lane.”

“ Oh, hush ! here she is,” said Ursula, losing all that importance of aspect which

her position as leader of the expedition had given her. A pretty blush of expectation came over her face—her dimples revealed themselves as if by magic. You will think it strange, perhaps, that the sight of one girl should produce this effect upon another. But then Phœbe represented to Ursula the only glimpse she had ever had into a world which looked gay and splendid to the country girl—a world in which Phœbe had appeared to her as a princess reigning in glory and delight. Ursula forgot both her companions and her recent occupation. Would the young lady in black notice her; stop, perhaps, and talk to her—remember her? Her eyes began to glow and dance with excitement. She stumbled as she went on in her anxiety, fixing her eyes upon the approaching figure. Phœbe, for her part, was taking a constitutional walk up and down Grange Lane, and she too was a little moved, recognising the girl, and wondering what it would be wisest to do

—whether to speak to her, and break her lonely promenade with a little society, or remember her “place,” and save herself from further mortification by passing the clergyman’s daughter, who was a cousin of the Dorsets, with a bow.

“The Dorsets wouldn’t recognise me, nor Miss May either,” Phœbe said to herself, “*if they knew—*”

But Ursula looked so wistful as they approached each other that she had not the courage to keep to this wise resolution. Though she was only the granddaughter of Tozer, the buttermilk man, she was much more a woman of the world than this pretty blushing girl who courted her notice. She put out her hand instinctively when they met. “It can’t harm anybody but myself, after all,” she thought.

“Oh, I am so glad you remember me,” cried Ursula. “I knew you in a moment. Have you come to stay here? This is my brother, Reginald, and my little sister, Janey” (how Janey scowled at that *little*!

and with reason, for she was by half an inch the taller of the two). "Are you taking a walk? I do hope you like Carlingford. I do hope you are going to stay. That is our house down at the end of the lane, close to St. Roque's. Papa is the clergyman there. It will be so delightful," said Ursula, repeating herself in her excitement, "if you are going to stay."

"I am going to stay for some time," said Phoebe graciously, "I don't quite know how long. I came here shortly after I saw you in town. My grandfather lives here. Grange Lane is very nice for a walk. Grandmamma is an invalid, so that I don't leave her very often. It was great luck finding you just as I had come out; for it is not cheerful walking alone."

Phoebe felt perfectly sure that through each of the three heads turned towards her a hurried inquiry was going on as to which of those enclosed houses contained the grandmother who was an invalid; but

no sort of enlightenment followed the inquiry, and as for Ursula it terminated abruptly in her mind with a rush of cordiality. She was not at an age when friendship pauses to make any inquiry into grandmothers.

“I am so glad! for if you are not going anywhere in particular, we may all walk together. Janey knows you quite well. I have talked of you so often” (here Phœbe gave a gracious bow and smile to Janey, who was not quite sure that she liked to be thus patronized), “and so does my brother,” said Ursula, more doubtfully. “Do you like Carlingford? Have you seen many people? Oh! I do hope you will stay.”

“I have not seen anybody,” said Phœbe. “My people are not much in society. When one is old and sick, I don’t suppose one cares—”

“There is no society to speak of in Carlingford,” said Reginald. “It is like most other country towns. If you like it,

we shall be sure your liking is quite disinterested, for it has no social charms—”

When had Reginald said so many words at a time to a young lady before? The girls exchanged glances. “I think it is pretty,” said Phœbe, closing the subject. “It is going to snow, don’t you think? I suppose you skate like all the young ladies now. It seems the first thing any-one thinks of when the winter begins.”

“Do you skate?” said Ursula, her eyes brighter and opener than ever.

“Oh, a little—as everybody does! Perhaps if there is no society,” said Phœbe, turning to Reginald for the first time, “people are free here from the necessity of doing as everybody does. I don’t think there is any such bondage in the world—dressing, living, working, amusing yourself—you have to do everything as other people do it. So I skate—I can’t help myself; and a hundred foolish things besides.”

“But I should think it *delightful*,” cried

Ursula, "I have always envied the boys. They look so warm when we are all shivering. Reginald, if it freezes will you teach us? I think I should like it better than anything in the world."

"Yes," said Reginald, "if Miss—if we can make up a party—if you," he added with a perfectly new inflection in his voice, "will come too."

"I see you don't know my name," said Phœbe with a soft little laugh. "It is Beecham. One never catches names at a party. I remembered yours, because of a family in a novel that I used to admire very much in my girlish days—"

"Oh! I know," cried Janey, "the Daisy Chain. We are not a set of prigs like those people. We are not goody whatever we are; we—"

"I don't suppose Miss Beecham cares for your opinion of the family character," said Reginald in a tone that made Janey furious. Thus discoursing they reached the gates of the Parsonage, where Ursula

was most eager that her friend should come in. And here Mr. May joined them, who was impressed, like everybody else, by Phœbe's appearance, and made himself so agreeable that Reginald felt eclipsed and driven into the background. Ursula had never been so satisfied with her father in her life; though there was a cloud on Mr. May's soul, it suited him to show a high good-humour with everybody in recompense for his son's satisfactory decision, and he was, indeed, in a state of high complaisance with himself for having managed matters so cleverly that the very thing which should have secured Reginald's final abandonment of the chaplaincy determined him, on the contrary, to accept it. And he admired Phœbe, and was dazzled by her self-possession and knowledge of the world. He supported Ursula's invitation warmly; but the stranger freed herself with graceful excuses. She had her patient to attend to.

“ That is a very lady-like young wo-

man,” said Mr. May, when they had gone in, after watching regretfully their new acquaintance’s progress through Grange Lane. “You met her in town, did you? A friend of the Dorsets? Where is she living, I wonder; and whom does she belong to? One does not often see that style of thing here.”

“I never saw anyone like her before,” said Ursula fervently; and they were still all uniting in admiration of Phœbe—when—

But such an interruption demands another page.

CHAPTER V.

THAT TOZER GIRL !

“WELL, who is she ?” cried Mrs. Sam Hurst, too curious to think of the ordinary decorums. She had no bonnet on, but a light “cloud” of white wool over her cap, and her whole aspect was full of eagerness and excitement. “Why didn’t you tell me you knew her ? Who is she ? I am dying to know.”

“Who is—who ?” said Ursula, rather glad of the opportunity of being politely rude to Mrs. Sam Hurst before papa. “How is anyone to find out from the way you speak ? She ? who is she ?”

“That is just what I want you to tell

me," said Mrs. Sam Hurst, with imperturbable good-humour. "You, Mr. May, you are always good to me, though Ursula has her little tempers—the girl you were talking to at the door. I stood and watched from the window, and I scarcely could contain myself not to bounce out in the middle of the talk. Now do tell, as the Americans say. Who is that Tozer girl?"

"That Tozer girl!" Ursula gave a little shriek, and grew first red and then pale with horror and dismay.

"Yes; I told you about her; so well dressed and looking so nice. That was she; with the very same dress, such a charming dress! so much style about it. Who is she, Ursula? Mr. May, tell me who is she? You can't imagine how much I want to know."

Ursula dropped into a chair, looking like a little ghost, faint and rigid. She said afterwards to Janey that she felt in the depths of her heart that it must be

true. She could have cried with pain and disappointment, but she would not give Mrs. Sam Hurst the pleasure of making her cry.

“There must be some mistake,” said Reginald, interposing. “This is a lady—my sister met her in town with the Dorsets.”

“Oh, does she know the Dorsets too?” said the inquirer? “That makes it still more interesting. Yes, that is the girl that is with the Tozers; there can be no mistake about it. She is the granddaughter. She was at the Meeting last night. I had it from the best authority—on the platform with old Tozer. And, indeed, Mr. May, how anyone that had been there could dare to look you in the face!—”

“I was there myself,” said Mr. May. “It amused me very much. Tell me now about this young person. Is she an impostor, taking people in, or what is it all about? Ursula looks as if she

was in the trick herself, and had been found out."

"I am *sure* she is not an impostor," said Ursula. "An impostor! If you had seen her as I saw her, at a great, beautiful, splendid ball. I never saw anything like it. I was nobody there—nobody—and neither were Cousin Anne and Cousin Sophy—but Miss Beecham! It is a mistake, I suppose," the girl said, raising herself up with great dignity; "when people are always trying for news, they get the wrong news sometimes, I don't doubt. You may be sure it is a mistake."

"That's me," said Mrs. Sam Hurst, with a laugh; "that is one of Ursula's assaults upon poor me. Yes, I confess it, I am fond of news; and I never said she was an impostor. Poor girl, I am dreadfully sorry for her. I think she is a good girl, trying to do her duty to her relations. She didn't choose her own grandfather. I daresay, if she'd had any

say in it, she would have made a very different choice. But whether your papa may think her a proper friend for you—being Tozer's grand-daughter, Miss Ursula, that's quite a different business, I am bound to say."

Again Ursula felt herself kept from crying by sheer pride, and nothing else. She bit her lips tight; she would not give in. Mrs. Hurst to triumph over her, and to give her opinion as to what papa might think proper! Ursula turned her back upon Mrs. Hurst, which was not civil, fearing every moment some denunciation from papa. But nothing of the kind came. He asked quite quietly after a while, "Where did you meet this young lady?" without any perceptible inflection of anger in his tone.

"Why, papa," cried Janey, distressed to be kept so long silent, "everybody knows where Ursula met her; no one has heard of anything else since she came home. She met her of course at the ball.

You know ; Reginald, *you* know ! The ball where she went with Cousin Anne."

"Never mind Cousin Anne ; I want the name of the people at whose house it was."

"Copperhead, papa," said Ursula, rousing herself. "If Cousin Anne does not know a lady from a common person, who does, I wonder ? It was Cousin Anne who introduced me to her (I think). Their name was Copperhead, and they lived in a great, big, beautiful house, in the street where ambassadors and quantities of great people live. I forget the name of it ; but I know there was an ambassador lived there, and Cousin Anne said——"

"Copperhead ! I thought so," said Mr. May. "When Ursula has been set agoing on the subject of Cousin Anne, there is nothing rational to be got from her after that for an hour or two. You take an interest in this young lady," he said shortly, turning to Mrs. Sam Hurst, who stood by

smiling, rather enjoying the commotion she had caused.

“Who, I? I take an interest in anybody that makes a stir, and gives us something to talk about,” said Mrs. Hurst, frankly. “You know my weakness. Ursula despises me for it, but you know human nature. If I did not take an interest in my neighbours what would become of me—a poor lone elderly woman, without either chick or child.”

She rounded off this forlorn description of herself with a hearty laugh, in which Janey, who had a secret kindness for their merry neighbour, though she feared her “for papa,” joined furtively. Mr. May, however, did not enter into the joke with the sympathy which he usually showed to Mrs. Hurst. He smiled, but there was something distraught and preoccupied in his air.

“How sorry we are all for you,” he said; “your position is truly melancholy. I am glad, for your sake, that old Tozer has a

pretty grand-daughter to beguile you now and then out of recollection of your cares."

There was a sharp tone in this which caught Mrs. Hurst's ear, and she was not disposed to accept any sharpness from Mr. May. She turned the tables upon him promptly.

"What a disgraceful business that Meeting was! Of course, you have seen the paper. There ought to be some way of punishing those agitators that go about the country, taking away people's characters. Could not you bring him up for libel, or Reginald? I never knew anything so shocking. To come to your own town, your own neighbourhood, and to strike you through your son! It is the nastiest, underhanded, unprincipled attack I ever heard of."

"What is that?" asked Reginald.

He was not easily roused by Carlingford gossip, but there was clearly more in this than met the eye.

"An Anti-State Church Meeting," said

Mr. May, "with special compliments in it to you and me. It is not worth our while to think of it. Your agitators, my dear Mrs. Hurst, are not worth powder and shot. Now, pardon me, but I must go to work. Will you go and see the sick people in Back Grove Street, Reginald? I don't think I can go to-day."

"I should like to know what was in the paper," said the young man, with an obstinacy that filled the girls with alarm. They had been in hopes that everything between father and son was to be happy and friendly, now that Reginald was about to do what his father wished.

"Oh, you shall see it," said Mrs. Hurst, half alarmed too; "but it is not anything, as your father says; only we women are sensitive. We are always thinking of things which, perhaps, were never intended to harm us. Ursula, you take my advice, and don't go and mix yourself up with Dissenters and that kind of people. The Tozer girl may be very nice, but she

is still Tozer's grand-daughter, after all."

Reginald followed the visitor out of the room, leaving his sisters very ill at ease within, and his father not without anxieties, which were so powerful, indeed, that he relieved his mind by talking of them to his daughters—a most unusual proceeding.

"That woman will set Reginald off at the nail again," he cried; "after he had begun to see things in a common-sense light. There was an attack made upon him last night on account of that blessed chaplaincy, which has been more trouble to me than it is worth. I suppose he'll throw it up now. But I wash my hands of the matter. I wonder how you girls can encourage that chattering woman to come here."

"Papa!" cried Janey, ever on the defensive, "we *hate* her! It is you who encourage her to come here."

"Oh, hush!" cried Ursula, with a warning glance; it was balm to her soul to hear her father call Mrs. Hurst *that woman*.

“ We have been to see the house,” she said ; “ it was very nice. I think Reginald liked it, papa.”

“ Ah, well,” said Mr. May, “ girls and boys are queer articles. I daresay the house, if he likes it, will weigh more with him than justice or common sense. So Copperhead was the people’s name? What would be wanted, do you think, Ursula, to make Reginald’s room into a comfortable room for a pupil? comfortable, recollect; not merely what would do; and one that has been used, I suppose, to luxury. You can look over it and let me know.”

“ Are we going to take a pupil, papa?” cried Janey, with widening eyes.

“ I don’t know what you could teach him,” he said. “ Manners, perhaps? Let me know, Ursula. The room is not a bad room; it would want a new carpet, curtains, perhaps—various things. Make me out a list. The Copperheads have a son, I believe. Did you see him at that fine ball of yours?”

“Oh! papa, he danced with me twice; he was very kind,” said Ursula, with a blush; “and he danced all the night with Miss Beecham. It must be a falsehood about her being old Tozer’s grand-daughter. Mr. Clarence Copperhead was always by her side. I think Mrs. Hurst must have made it all up out of her own head.”

Mr. May gave a little short laugh.

“Poor Mrs. Hurst!” he said, recovering his temper; “how bitter you all are against her. ‘So he danced with you twice? You must try to make him comfortable, Ursula, if he comes here.’”

“Is Mr. Clarence Copperhead coming here?”

Ursula was struck dumb by this piece of news. The grand house in Portland Place, and all Sophy Dorset’s questions and warnings, came suddenly back to her mind. She blushed fiery red; she could not tell why. Coming here! How strange it would be, how extraordinary, to have to order dinner for him, and get his room in

order, and have him in the drawing-room in the evenings! How should she know what to say to him? or would papa keep him always at work, reading Greek or something downstairs? All this flashed through her mind with the rapidity of lightning. Mr. May made no reply. He was walking up and down the room with his hands behind him, as was his habit when he was "busy." Being busy was separated from being angry by the merest visionary line in Mr. May's case; his children never ventured on addressing him at such moments, and it is impossible to describe how glad they were when he withdrew to his own room before Reginald's return; but not a minute too soon. The young man came back, looking black as night. He threw himself into a chair, and then he got up again, and began also to walk about the room like his father. At first he would make no reply to the questions of the girls.

"It is exactly what I expected," he

said ; “just what I looked for. I knew it from the first moment.”

It was Janey, naturally, who had least patience with this unsatisfactory utterance.

“If it was just what you expected, and you looked for it all the time, why should you make such a fuss now?” she cried. “I declare, for all you are young, and we are fond of you, you are almost as bad as papa.”

Reginald did not take any notice of this address ; he went on repeating the same words at intervals.

“A child might have known it. Of course, from the beginning one knew how it must be.” Then he suddenly faced round upon Ursula, who was nearly crying in excitement and surprise. “But if they think I am to be driven out of a resolution I have made by what they say—if they think that I will be bullied into giving up because of their claptrap,” he cried, looking sternly at her, “then you will find you are mistaken. You will find I am not

such a weak idiot as you suppose. Give up ! because some demagogue from a Dissenting Committee takes upon him to criticise my conduct. If you think I have so little self-respect, so little stamina," he said, fiercely, "you will find you have made a very great mistake."

"Oh, Reginald, *me?*" cried Ursula, with tears in her eyes ; "did I ever think anything unkind of you ? did I ever ask you to do anything that was disagreeable ? You should not look as if it was me."

Then he threw himself down again on the old sofa, which creaked and tottered under the shock.

"Poor little Ursula !" he cried, with a short laugh. "Did you think I meant you ? But if they thought they would master me by these means," said Reginald with pale fury, "they never made a greater mistake, I can tell you. A parcel of trumpery agitators, speechifiers, little petty demagogues, whom nobody ever heard of before. A fine thing, indeed, to have all

the shopkeepers of Carlingford sitting in committee on one's conduct, isn't it—telling one what one ought to do? By Jupiter! It's enough to make a man swear!"

"I declare!" cried Janey loudly, "how like Reginald is to papa! I never saw it before. When he looks wicked like that, and sets his teeth—but I am not going to be pushed, not by my brother, or any one!" said the girl, growing red, and making a step out of his reach. "I won't stand it! I am not a child any more than you."

Janey's wrath was appeased, however, when Reginald produced the paper and read Northcote's speech aloud. In her interest she drew nearer and nearer, and read the obnoxious column over his shoulder, joining in Ursula's cries of indignation. By the time the three had thus got through it, Reginald's own agitation subsided into that fierce amusement which is the frequent refuge of the assaulted.

“Old Green in the chair ! and old Tozer and the rest have all been sitting upon me,” he said, with that laugh which is proverbially described as from the wrong side of the mouth, whatever that may be. Ursula said nothing in reply, but in her heart she felt yet another stab. Tozer ! This was another complication. She had taken so great a romantic interest in the heroine of that ball, which was the most entrancing moment of Ursula’s life, that it seemed a kind of disloyalty to her dreams to give up thus completely, and dethrone the young lady in black ; but what could the poor girl do ? In the excitement of this question the personality of Reginald’s special assailant was lost altogether : the girls did not even remember his name.

CHAPTER VI.

A NEW FRIEND.

AFTER this there followed an exciting interval for the family at the Parsonage. Reginald, with the impatience of anger, insisted upon transporting himself to the College at once, and entering upon "his duties," such as they were, in defiance of all public comment. And Mr. May, delighted with the headstrong resentment which served his purpose so well, promoted it by all the means in his power, goading his son on, if he showed any signs of relaxing, by references to public opinion, and what the Liberation Society would say. Before those curtains

were ready, which the girls had ordered with so much pride, or the carpet laid down, he had taken possession, and his room in the Parsonage was already turned upside down preparing for a new inmate. Many and strange were the thoughts in Ursula's mind about this new inmate. She remembered Clarence Copperhead as a full-grown man, beyond, it seemed to her, the age at which pupillage was possible. What was he coming to Carlingford for? What was he coming to the Parsonage for? What could papa do with a pupil quite as old as Reginald, who, in his own person, had often taken pupils? Ursula had read as many novels as were natural at her age, and can it be supposed that she did not ask herself whether there was any other meaning in it? Could he be coming to Carlingford on account of Miss Beecham; or, on account of—any one else? Ursula never whispered, even to her own imagination, on account of *me*. But it is not to be supposed that

the unbidden inarticulate thought did not steal in, fluttering her girlish soul. Everybody knows that in fiction, at least, such things occur continually, and are the most natural things in the world; and to Ursula, beyond her own little common-place world, which she somewhat despised, and the strange world undeciphered and wonderful to which the Dorsets had introduced her for those ten brief days in London, the world of fiction was the only sphere she knew; and in that sphere there could be no such natural method of accounting for a young man's actions as that of supposing him to be "in love." The question remained, was it with Miss Beecham, or was it with—anybody else? Such an inquiry could not but flutter her youthful bosom. She made his room ready for him, and settled how he was to be disposed of, with the strangest sense of something beneath, which her father would never suspect, but which, perhaps, she alone might know.

Clarence Copperhead was a more imposing figure to Ursula than he was in reality. She had seen him only twice, and he was a big and full-grown "gentleman," while Ursula only realised herself as a little girl. She was not even aware that she had any intelligence to speak of, or that she would be a fit person to judge of "a gentleman." To be sure she had to do many things which wanted thought and sense; but she was too unthoughtful of herself to have decided this as yet, or to have created any private tribunal at which to judge a newcomer of Clarence Copperhead's dimensions. A much greater personage than she was, an individual whose comings and goings could not be without observation, whose notice would be something exciting and strange, was what she took him to be. And Ursula *was* excited. Did Mrs. Copperhead, that kind little woman know why he was coming—was she in his confidence? And how was Ursula to entertain him,

to talk to him—a gentleman accustomed to so much better society? She did not say anything to Janey on this subject, though Janey was not without her curiosities too, and openly indulged in conjectures as to the new pupil.

“ I wonder if he will be fine. I wonder if he will be very good,” said Janey. “ I wonder if he will fall in love with Ursula. Pupils, in books, always do; and then there is a dreadful fuss and bother, and the girl is sent away. It is hard for the girl; it is always supposed to be her fault. I would not allow papa to take any pupils if it was me.”

“ And much your papa would care for your permission,” said Mrs. Sam Hurst. “ But so far I agree with you, Janey, that before he has pupils, or any thing of that sort, there ought to be a lady in the house. He should marry—”

“ Marry! we don’t want a lady in the house,” cried Janey, “ we are ladies ourselves, I hope. Marry! if he does, I,

for one, will do all I can to make his life miserable," said the girl with energy. "What should he want to marry for when he has daughters grown up? There are enough of us already, I should think."

"Too many," said Mrs. Sam Hurst with a sigh. It gave her the greatest secret delight to play upon the girl's fears.

Besides this, however, Ursula had another preoccupation. In that cordial meeting with the young lady who had turned out to be a person in such an embarrassing position, there had been a great deal said about future meetings, walks, and expeditions together, and Ursula had been very desirous that Phœbe should fix some time for their first encounter. She thought of this now with blushes that seemed to burn her cheeks. She was afraid to go out, lest she should meet the girl she had been so anxious to make a friend of. Not that, on her own account, after the first shock, Ursula would have been hard-hearted enough to deny her ac-

quaintance to Tozer's grand-daughter. In the seclusion of her chamber, she had cried over the downfall of her ideal friend very bitterly, and felt the humiliation for Phœbe more cruelly than that young lady felt it for herself; but Ursula, however, much it might have cost her, would have stood fast to her friendship had she been free to do as she pleased.

"I did not like her for her grandfather," she said to Janey, of whom, in this case, she was less unwilling to make a confidant. "I never thought of the grandfather. What does it matter to me if he were a sweep instead of old Tozer."

"Old Tozer is just as bad as if he were a sweep," said Janey, "if you had ever thought of her grandfather, and known he was old Tozer, you would have felt it would not do."

"What is about a grandfather? I don't know if we ever had any," said Ursula. "Mamma had, for the Dorsets are her relations—but papa. Mr. Griffiths's grand-

father was a candlemaker ; I have heard papa say so—and they go everywhere.”

“ But he is dead,” said Janey, with great shrewdness, “ and he was rich.”

“ You little nasty calculating thing ! Oh, how I hate rich people ; how I hate this horrid world, that loves money and loves fine names, and does not care for people’s selves whether they are bad or good ! I shall never dare to walk up Grange Lane again,” said Ursula, with tears. “ Fancy changing to her, after being so glad to see her ! fancy never saying another word about the skating, or the walk to the old mill ! How she will despise me for being such a miserable creature ! and she will think it is all my own fault.”

At this moment Mr. May, from the door of his study, called “ Ursula ! ” repeating the call with some impatience when she paused to dry her eyes. She ran down to him quickly, throwing down her work in her haste. He was standing at the door, and somehow for the first time the worn

look about his eyes struck Ursula with a touch of pity. She had never noticed it before: a look of suppressed pain and anxiety, which remained about his eyes though the mouth smiled. It had never occurred to her to be sorry for her father before, and the idea struck her as very strange now.

“Come in,” he said, “I want to speak to you. I have been thinking about the young woman—this friend of yours. We are all among the Dissenters nowadays, whatever Mrs. Sam Hurst may say. You seem to have taken a fancy to this Tozer girl?”

“Don’t call her so, papa, please. She is a lady in herself, as good a lady as any one.”

“Well! I don’t say anything against her, do I? So you hold by your fancy? You are not afraid of Grange Lane and Mrs. Sam Hurst.”

“I have not seen her again,” said Ursula, cast down. “I have not been out at

all. I could not bear to be so friendly one day, and then to pass as if one did not know her the next. I cannot do it," cried the girl, in tears; "if I see her, I must just be the same as usual to her, whatever you say."

"Very well, *be* the same as usual," said Mr. May; "that is why I called you. I have my reasons. Notwithstanding Tozer, be civil to the girl. I have my reasons for what I say."

"Do you mean it, papa!" said Ursula, delighted. "Oh, how good of you! You don't mind—you really don't mind? Oh! I can't tell you how thankful I am; for to pretend to want to be friends, and then to break off all in a moment because of a girl's grandfather ——"

"Don't make a principle of it, Ursula. It is quite necessary, in an ordinary way, to think of a girl's grandfather—and a boy's too, for that matter. No shopkeeping friends for me; but in this individual case I am willing to make an exception. For

the moment, you see, Dissenters are in the ascendant. Young Copperhead is coming next week. Now, go."

Ursula marched delighted upstairs. "Janey, run and get your hat," she said; "I am going out. I am not afraid of any one now. Papa is a great deal nicer than he ever was before. He says I may see Miss Beecham as much as I like. He says we need not mind Mrs. Sam Hurst. I am so glad! I shall never be afraid of that woman any more."

Janey was taken altogether by surprise. "I hope he is not going to fall in love with Miss Beecham," she said suspiciously. "I have heard Betsy say that old gentlemen often do."

"He is not so foolish as to fall in love with anybody," said Ursula, with dignity. "Indeed, Janey, you ought to have much more respect for papa. I wish you could be sent to school and learn more sense. You give your opinion as if you were—twenty—more than that. I am sure I

never should have ventured to say such things when I was a child like you."

"Child yourself!" said Janey indignant; which was her last resource when she had nothing more to say; but Ursula was too busy putting aside her work and preparing for her walk to pay any attention. In proportion as she had been subdued and downcast heretofore, she was gay now. She forgot all about old Tozer; about the Dissenters' meeting, and the man who had made an attack upon poor Reginald. She flew to her room for her hat and jacket, and ran downstairs, singing to herself. Janey only overtook her, out of breath, as she emerged into the road from the Parsonage door.

"What a dreadful hurry you are in," said Janey. "I always get ready so much quicker than you do. Is it all about this girl, because she is new? I never knew you were so fond of new people before."

But that day they went up and down Grange Lane fruitlessly, without seeing

anything of Phœbe, and Ursula returned home disconsolate. In the evening Reginald intimated carelessly that he had met Miss Beecham. "She is much better worth talking to than most of the girls one meets with, whoever her grandfather may be," he said, evidently with an instant readiness to stand on the defensive.

"Oh, did you talk to her," said Ursula, "without knowing? Reginald, papa has no objections. He says we may even have her here, if we please."

"Well, of course I suppose he must guide you in that respect," said Reginald, "but it does not matter particularly to me. Of course I talked to her. Even my father could not expect that his permission was needed for me."

At which piece of self-assertion the girls looked at him with admiring eyes. Already they felt there was a difference. Reginald at home, nominal curate, without pay or position, was a different thing from Reginald with an appointment, a house of his

own, and two hundred and fifty pounds a year. The girls looked at him admiringly, but felt that this was never likely to be their fate. In everything the boys had so much the best of it; and yet it was almost a comfort to think that they had seen Reginald himself trembling before papa. Reginald had a great deal to tell them about the college, about the old men who made a hundred daily claims on his attention, and the charities which he had to administer, doles of this and that, and several charity schools of a humble class.

“As for my time, it is not likely to hang on my hands as I thought. I can’t be a parish Quixote, as we planned, Ursula, knocking down windmills for other people,” he said, adjusting his round edge of collar. He was changed; he was important, a personage in his own sight, no longer to be spoken of as Mr. May’s son. Janey ventured on a little laugh when he went away, but Ursula did not like the change.

“Never mind,” cried Janey; “I hope

Copperhead will be nice. We shall have him to talk to, when he comes."

"Oh!" cried Ursula, in a kind of despair, "who taught you to call gentlemen like that by their name? There is nothing so vulgar. Why, Cousin Anne says—"

"Oh, Cousin Anne!" cried Janey, shaking her head, and dancing away. After that, she was aware there was nothing for it but flight.

Next day, however, they were more successful. Phœbe, though very little older than Ursula, was kind to the country girls, and talked to them both, and drew them out. She smiled when she heard of Clarence Copperhead, and told them that he was not very clever, but she did not think there was any harm in him.

"It is his father who is disagreeable," said Phœbe; "didn't you think so? You know, papa is a minister, Miss May," (she did not say clergyman when she spoke to a churchwoman, for what was the use of exciting any one's prejudices?) "and Mr.

Copperhead comes to our church. You may be very thankful, in that respect, that you are not a Dissenter. But it will be very strange to see Clarence Copperhead in Carlingford. I have known him since I was no bigger than your little sister. To tell the truth," said Phœbe, frankly, "I think I am rather sorry he is coming here."

"Why?" cried bold Janey, who was always inquisitive.

Miss Phœbe only smiled and shook her head; she made no distinct reply.

"Poor fellow, I suppose he has been 'plucked,' as the gentlemen call it, or 'ploughed,' does your brother say? University slang is very droll. He has not taken his degree, I suppose, and they want him to work before going up again. I am sorry for your father, too, for I don't think it will be very easy to get anything into Clarence Copperhead's mind. But there is no harm at all in him, and he used to be very nice to his mother. Mamma and

I liked him for that ; he was always very nice to his mother."

"Will you come in and have some tea?" said Ursula. "Do, please. I hope, now that I have met you again, you will not refuse me. I was afraid you had gone away, or something—"

Ursula, however, could not help looking guilty as she spoke, and Phœbe perceived at once that there had been some reason for the two or three days' disappearance of the girls from Grange Lane.

"You must tell me first," she said, with a smile, "whether you know who I am. If you ask me after that, I shall come. I am old Mr. Tozer's grand-daughter, who had a shop in the High Street. My uncle has a shop there now. I do not like it myself," said Phœbe, with the masterly candour that distinguished her, "and no one else can be expected to like it. If you did not know—"

"Oh, we heard directly," cried Janey; Mrs. Sam Hurst told us. She came

shrieking ‘Who is she?’ before your back was turned that day ; for she wondered to see you with old Tozer—”

“Janey!” cried Ursula, with horror. “Of course we know ; and please will you come ? Every new person in Carlingford gets talked over, and if an angel were to walk about, Mrs. Sam Hurst would never rest till she had found out where he came from.”

“And, perhaps, whether he had a broken feather in his wing,” said Phœbe. “I am very glad you don’t mind. It will be very pleasant to come. I will run in and tell them, and then I will join you. Grand-mamma is an invalid, and would like to know where I am.”

And the news made a considerable flutter in the dim room where Mrs. Tozer sat between the fire and the window, looking out upon the crocuses and regretting the High Street.

“But run and put on another dress, dear. What will they think of you in that

everlasting brown frock as you're so fond of? I'd like them to see as my grandchild could dress as nice as any lady in the land."

"She'll not see much finery there," said Tozer; "they're as poor as church mice, are them Mays, and never a penny to pay a bill when it's wanted. I don't think as Phœbe need mind her dressing to go there."

"And you'll send for me if you want me, grandmamma; you will be sure to send?"

But for the brown frock, Mrs. Tozer's satisfaction would have been unalloyed as she watched her grand-daughter walking across the garden.

"She's at home among the quality, she is," said the old woman; "maybe more so than she is with you and me; but there ain't a better girl in all England, and that I'll say for her, though if she would think a little more about her clothes, as is nat'ral

at her age, it would be more pleasing to me."

"The worst dress as Phœbe has is better than anything belonging to them Mays," said Tozer.

He did not care for the parson at St. Roque; though he was pleased that his child should be among "the quality." But it was on that evening that poor old Mrs. Tozer had one of her attacks, and Phœbe had to be summoned back at an early hour. The servant went down with an umbrella and a note, to bring her home; and that trifling incident had its influence upon after affairs, as the reader shall shortly see.

CHAPTER VI.

A DESPERATE EXPEDIENT.

IT was something of a comfort to Phœbe to find that the “tea” to which Ursula asked her was a family meal, such as Mr. and Mrs. Tozer indulged in, in Grange Lane, with no idea of dinner to follow, as in more refined circles. This, she said to herself benignly, must be “country fashion,” and she was naturally as bland and gracious at the Parsonage tea-table as anybody from town, knowing better, but desiring to make herself thoroughly agreeable, could be. She amused Mr. May very much, who felt the serene young princess, accepting her vulgar relations

with gentle resignation, and supported by a feeling of her own innate dignity, to be something quite new to him. Phœbe had no objection to talk upon the subject, for, clever as she was, she was not so clever as to see through Mr. May's amused show of interest in her trials, but believed ingenuously that he understood and felt for her, and was, perhaps, at last, the one noble, impartial, and generous Churchman who could see the difficulties of cultivated Dissenters, and enter into them sympathetically. Why Mr. May took the trouble to draw her out on this point it is more difficult to explain. Poor man, he was in a state of semi-distractedness over Cotsdean's bill. The ten days had shortened into three, and he was no nearer finding that hundred pounds than ever. Even while he smiled and talked to Phœbe, he was repeating over and over to himself the terrible fact which could not now be ignored. "17th, 18th, 19th, and Friday will be the 20th," he was saying to him-

self. If that 20th came without any help, Cotsdean would be virtually made a bankrupt; for of course all his creditors would make a rush upon him, and all his affairs would be thrown open to the remorseless public gaze, if the bill, which had been so often renewed, had to be dishonoured at last. Mr. May had a conscience, though he was not careful of his money, and the fear of ruin to Cotsdean was a very terrible and real oppression to him. The recollection was upon him like the vulture in classic story, tearing and gnawing, as he sat there and smiled over the cup of tea Ursula gave him, feeling amused all the same at Phoebe's talk. He could scarcely have told why he had permitted his daughter to pursue her acquaintance with Tozer's grand-daughter. Partly it was because of Clarence Copperhead; out of curiosity, as, being about to be brought in contact with some South Sea Islander or Fijian, one would naturally wish to see another who was thrown in one's way by

accident, and thus prepare one's self for the permanent acquaintance. And she amused him. Her cleverness, her ease, her conversational powers, her woman of the world aspect, did not so much impress him, perhaps, as they did others; but the complacency and innocent confidence of youth that were in her, and her own enjoyment of the situation, notwithstanding the mortifications incurred—all this amused Mr. May. He listened to her talk, sometimes feeling himself almost unable to bear it, for the misery of those words, which kept themselves ringing in a dismal chorus in his own mind, and yet deriving a kind of amusement and distraction from it all the same.

“One of your friends was very hard upon my son—and myself—at your Meeting the other night, Miss Beecham.”

“He was very injudicious,” said Phoebe, shaking her head. “Indeed I did not approve. Personalities never advance any cause. I said so to him. Don't you

think the Church has herself to blame for those political Dissenters, Mr. May? You sneer at us, and look down upon us—”

“I? I don’t sneer at anybody.”

“I don’t mean you individually; but Churchmen do. They treat us as if we were some strange kind of creatures, from the heart of Africa perhaps. They don’t think we are just like themselves: as well educated; meaning as well; with as much right to our own ideas.”

Mr. May could scarcely restrain a laugh. “Just like themselves.” The idea of a Dissenter setting up to be as well educated, and as capable of forming an opinion, as a cultivated Anglican, an Oxford man, and a beneficed clergyman, was too novel and too foolish not to be somewhat startling as well. Mr. May was aware that human nature is strangely blind to its own deficiencies, but was it possible that any delusion could go so far as this? He did laugh a little—just the ghost of a laugh—at the idea. But what is the use of

making any serious opposition to such a statement? the very fact of contesting the assumption seemed to give it a certain weight.

“Whenever this is done,” said Phœbe, with serene philosophy, “I think you may expect a revulsion of feeling. The class to which papa belongs is very friendly to the Established Church, and wishes to do her every honour.”

“Is it indeed? We ought to be much gratified,” said Mr. May.

Phœbe gave him a quick glance, but he composed his face and met her look meekly. It actually diverted him from his preoccupation, and that is a great deal to say.

“We would willingly do her any honour; we would willingly be friends, even look up to her, if that would please her,” added Phœbe, very gravely, conscious of the importance of what she was saying; “but when we see clergymen, and common persons also, who have never had one rational

thought on the subject, always setting us down as ignorant and uncultured, because we are Dissenters——”

“But no one does that,” said Ursula, soothingly, eager to save her new friend’s feelings. She paused in the act of pouring out the children’s second cup of tea, and looked up at her with eyes full of caressing and flattering meaning. “No one at least, I am sure,” she added faltering, remembering suddenly things she had heard said of Dissenters, “who knows *you*.”

“It is not I that ought to be thought of, it is the general question. Then can you wonder that a young man like the gentleman we were talking of, clever and energetic, and an excellent scholar (and very good in philosophy, too—he was at Jena for two or three years), should be made bitter when he feels himself thrust back upon a community of small shopkeepers?”

Mr. May could not restrain another short laugh.

“We must not join in the vulgar abuse of shopkeepers,” he said.

Phœbe’s colour rose. She raised her head a little, then perceiving the superiority of her former position, smiled.

“I have no right to do so. My people, I suppose, were all shopkeepers to begin with ; but this gives me ways of knowing. Grandpapa is very kind and nice—really nice, Mr. May ; but he has not at all a wide way of looking at things. I feel it, though they are so kind to me. I have been brought up to think in such a different way ; and if I feel it, who am fond of them, think how that young minister must feel it, who was brought up in a totally different class ?”

“What kind of class was this one brought up in ?” said Mr. May, with a laugh. “He need not have assaulted Reginald, if he had been born a prince. We had done him no harm.”

“That is making it entirely a private question,” said Phœbe, suavely, “which I

did not mean to do. When such a man finds out abuses—what he takes to be abuses—in the Church, which treats him like a roadside ranter, may not he feel a right to be indignant? Oh, I am not so. I think such an office as that chaplaincy is very good, one here and there for the reward of merit; and I think he was very right to take it; but still it would not do, would it, to have many of them? It would not answer any good purpose,” she said, administering a little sting scientifically, “if all clergymen held sinecures.”

These words were overheard by Reginald, who just then came in, and to whom it was startling to find Phœbe serenely seated at tea with his family. The hated word sinecure did not seem to affect him from her lips, as it would have done from anyone else’s. He came in quite good-humouredly, and said with a smile,

“You are discussing me. What about me? Miss Beecham, I hope you take my side.”

“I take everybody’s side,” said Phœbe; “for I try to trace people’s motives. I can sympathize both with you and those who assailed you.”

“Oh, that Dissenting fellow. I beg your pardon, Miss Beecham, if you are a Dissenter; but I cannot help it. We never go out of our way to attack them and their chapels and coteries, and why should they spring at our throats on every occasion? I think it is hard, and I can’t say I have any charity to spare for this individual. What had we done to him? Ursula, give me some tea.”

“Miss Beecham, I leave the cause of the Church in younger and, I hope, abler hands,” said Mr. May, getting up.

Partly it was that Reginald’s onslaught made him see for the first time certain weak points in the situation; partly it was that his private care became too clamorous, and he could not keep on further. He went away quite abruptly, and went downstairs to his study, and shut himself in

there ; and the moment he had closed the door, all his amusement floated away, and the vulture gripped at him, beak and talons digging into his very soul. Good God ! what was he to do ? He covered his face with his hands, and turned round and round mentally in that darkness to see if anywhere there might be a gleam of light ; but none was visible east or west. A hundred pounds, only a hundred pounds ; a bagatelle, a thing that to many men was as small an affair as a stray sixpence ; and here was this man, as good, so to speak, as any—well educated, full of gifts and accomplishments, well born, well connected, not a prodigal nor open sinner, losing himself in the very blackness of darkness, feeling that a kind of moral extinction was the only prospect before him, for want of this little sum. It seemed incredible even to himself, as he sat and brooded over it. Somehow, surely, there must be a way of deliverance. He looked piteously about him in his solitude, appealing to the

very blank walls to save him. What could they do? His few books, his faded old furniture, would scarcely have realized a hundred pounds if they had been sold to-morrow. All his friends had been wearied out, all natural resources had failed. James might any day have sent the money, but he had not done so—just this special time, when it was so hard to get it, James, too, had failed; and the hours of this night were stealing away like thieves, so swift and so noiseless, to be followed by the others, and Cotsdean, poor soul, his faithful retainer, would be broken and ruined. To do Mr. May justice, if it had been only himself who could be ruined, he would have felt it less; but it went to his very heart to think of poor Cotsdean, who had trusted in him so entirely, and to whom, indeed, he had been very kind in his day. Strife and discord had been in the poor man's house, and perpetual wretchedness, and Mr. May had managed, he himself could scarcely tell how, to set

it right. He had frightened and subdued the passionate wife, and quenched the growing tendencies to evil, which made her temper worse than it was by nature, and had won her back to soberness and some kind of peace, changing the unhappy house into one of comparative comfort and cheerfulness. Most people like those best to whom they have been kind, whom they have served or benefited, and in this way Mr. May was fond of Cotsdean, who in his turn had been a very good friend to his clergyman, serving him as none of his own class could have done, going in the face of all his own prejudices and the timorousness of nature, on his account. And the result was to be ruin—ruin unmitigated to the small man who was in business, and equally disastrous, though in a less creditable way, to his employer. It was with a suppressed anguish which is indescribable that he sat there, with his face covered, looking this approaching misery in the face. How long he had been there, he

could scarcely himself tell, when he heard a little commotion in the hall, the sounds of running up and downstairs, and opening of doors. He was in a feverish and restless condition, and every stir roused him. Partly because of that impatience in his mind, and partly because every new thing seemed to have some possibility of hope in it, he got up and went to the door. Before he returned to his seat, something might have occurred to him, something might have happened—who could tell? It might be the postman with a letter containing that remittance from James, which still would set all right. It might be—he rose suddenly, and opening the door, held it ajar and looked out; the front door was open, and the night air blowing chilly into the house, and on the stairs, coming down, he heard the voices of Ursula and Phœbe. Ursula was pinning a shawl round her new friend, and consoling her.

“I hope you will find it is nothing. I am so sorry,” she said.

“Oh, I am not very much afraid,” said Phœbe. “She is ill, but not very bad, I hope; and it is not dangerous. Thank you so much for letting me come.”

“You will come again?” said Ursula, kissing her; “promise that you will come again.”

Mr. May listened with a certain surface of amusement in his mind. How easy and facile these girlish loves and fancies were! Ursula knew nothing of this stranger, and yet so free were the girl's thoughts, so open her heart to receive impressions, that on so short knowledge she had received the other into it with undoubting confidence and trust. He did not come forward himself to say good-bye, but he perceived that Reginald followed downstairs, and took his hat from the table, to accompany Phœbe home. As they closed the outer door behind them, the last gust thus forcibly shut in made a rush through the narrow hall, and carried a scrap of paper to Mr. May's feet. He picked it up

almost mechanically, and carried it with him to the light, and looked at it without thought. There was not much in it to interest any one. It was the little note which Tozer had sent to his granddaughter by the maid, not prettily folded, to begin with, and soiled and crumpled by the bearer.

“Your grandmother is took bad with one of her attacks. Come back directly. She wants you badly.

“SAML. TOZER.”

This was all that was in it. Mr. May opened it out on his table with a half-smile of that same superficial amusement which the entire incident had caused him—the contact, even momentary, of his own household with that of Tozer, the old Dissenting buttermilk, was so droll an event. Then he sank down on his chair again with a sigh, the amusement dying out all at once, purely superficial as it was. Amusement! how strange that even the

idea of amusement should enter his head in the midst of his despair. His mind renewed that horrible mechanical wandering through the dismal circle of might-be's which still survived amid the chaos of his thoughts. Once or twice there seemed to gleam upon him a stray glimmer of light through a loophole, but only to throw him back again into the darkness. Now and then he roused himself with a look of real terror in his face, when there came a noise outside. What he was afraid of was poor Cotsdean coming in with his hand to his forehead, and his apologetic "Beg your pardon, Sir." If he came, what could he say to him? Two days—only two days more! If Mr. May had been less sensible and less courageous, he would most likely have ended the matter by a pistol or a dose of laudanum; but fortunately he was too rational to deliver himself by this desperate expedient, which, of course, would only have made the burden more terrible upon the survivors. If Cotsdean was to

be ruined, and there was no remedy, Mr. May was man enough to feel that it was his business to stand by him, not to escape in any dastardly way; but in the meantime to face Cotsdean, and tell him that he had done and could do nothing, seemed more than the man who had caused his ruin, could bear. He moved about uneasily in his chair in the anguish of his mind. As he did so, he pushed off some of his papers from the table with his elbow. It was some sort of break in his feverish musings to pick them up again in a bundle, without noticing what they were. He threw them down in a little heap before him. On the top, as chanced, came the little dirty scrap of paper, which ought to have been tossed into the fire or the waste-paper basket. Saml. Tozer! What was Saml. Tozer to him that his name should stare him in the face in this obtrusive way? Tozer, the old buttermilk! a mean and ignorant person, as far beneath Mr. May's level as it is possible to imagine,

whose handwriting it was very strange to see on anything but a bill. He fixed his eyes upon it mechanically; he had come, as it were, to the end of all things in those feverish musings; he had searched through his whole known world for help, and found there nothing and nobody to help him. Those whom he had once relied on were exhausted long ago; his friends had all dropped off from him, as far, at least, as money was concerned. Some of them might put out a hand to keep him and his children from starvation even now, but to pay Cotsdean's bill, never. There was no help anywhere, nor any hope. Natural ways and means were all exhausted, and though he was a clergyman, he had no such faith in the supernatural as to hope much for the succour of Heaven. Heaven! what could Heaven do for him? Bank-notes did not drop down out of the skies. There had been a time when he had felt full faith in "Providence;" but he seemed to have nothing to expect now from that

quarter more than from any other. Samuel Tozer! why did that name always come uppermost, staring into his very eyes? It was a curious signature, the handwriting very rude and unrefined, with odd, illiterate dashes, and yet with a kind of rough character in it, easy to identify, not difficult to copy—

What was it that brought beads of moisture all at once to Mr. May's forehead? He started up suddenly, pushing his chair with a hoarse exclamation, and walked up and down the room quickly, as if trying to escape from something. His heart jumped up in his breast, like a thing possessed of separate life, and thumped against his side, and beat with loud pulsations in his ears. When he caught sight of himself in the mirror over the mantelpiece, he started as if he had seen a ghost. Some one else seemed to see him; seemed to pounce upon and seize him out of that glass. He retreated from the reach of it, almost staggering; then he returned to

his table. What thought was it that had struck him so wildly, like a sudden squall upon a boat? He sat down, and covered his face with his hands; then putting out one finger, stealthily drew the paper towards him, and studied it closely from under the shadow of the unmoved hand, which half supported, half covered his face. Well! after all what would be the harm? a gain of three months' time, during which every sort of arrangement could be made so nicely; supplies got anywhere, everywhere; the whole machinery of being set easily in motion again, and no harm done to anyone: this was the real force of the idea—no harm done to anyone! Long before the three months were out, that hundred pounds—a paltry business, a nothing, when a man had time before him—could be got, one might make sure; and where was the harm? *He* would never know it. Poor Cotsdean need never have the slightest burden upon his conscience. Here in the stillness of his own room, it

could all be done as easily as possible, without a soul being taken into confidence, except that bloodless wretch in the glass with his staring face, Mr. May said to himself, only dimly sensible that this wretch was himself. No, it would harm no one, that was clear; it never need be known to anyone. It was a mere act of borrowing, and borrowing was never accounted a crime; borrowing not money even, only a name, and for so short a time. No harm; it could do no one in the world any harm.

While these reasonings went on in his mind, his heart dropped down again into its right place; his pulse ceased to beat like the pistons of a steam-engine; he came gradually to himself. After all what was it? Not such a great matter; a loan of something which would neither enrich him who took, nor impoverish him who, without being aware of it, should give—a nothing! Why people should entertain the prejudices they did on the subject, it was difficult to

see, though, perhaps, he allowed candidly to himself, it might be dangerous for any ignorant man to follow the same strain of thinking; but in the hands of a man who was not ignorant, who knew, as he himself did, exactly how far to go, and what might be *innocently* done; *innocently* done—in his own mind he put great stress on this—why, what was it? a thing which might be of use in an emergency, and which was absolutely no harm.

Mr. May was late in leaving his room that night. It was understood in the family that he “was writing,” and all was kept very quiet in the house; yet not sufficiently quiet, for Janey, when she brought in the coffee, placing it on the table close to the door, was startled by the fierceness of the exclamation with which her father greeted her entrance.

“What do you want prying here?” he said, dropping his hand over the writing.

“Prying himself!” said Janey, furiously, when she was up again in the cheerful

light of the drawing-room ; “ a great deal there is to pry into in that dreadful old study.”

“ Hush ! he never likes to be disturbed in his writing,” said Ursula, soothingly.

And he sat at his “ writing” to a much later hour than usual, and he stumbled upstairs to his bedroom in the dead of the night, with the same scared pale face which he had seen in the glass. Such a look as that when it once comes upon a man’s face, takes a long time to glide away ; but his heart beat more tranquilly, and the blood flowed even in his veins. After all, where was the harm ?

CHAPTER VIII.

TIDED OVER.

NEXT morning, Cotsdean was mournfully turning over his ledger in his shop in the High Street, wondering whether he should go back to Mr. May, on another forlorn expedition, or whether he should betray his overwhelming anxiety to his wife, who knew nothing about the state of affairs. The shop was what is called a cornfactor's shop, full of sacks of grain, with knots of wheat-ears done up ornamentally in the window, a stock not very valuable, but sufficient, and showing a good, if not a very important, business. A young man behind, attended to what

little business was going on; for the master himself was too much preoccupied to think of bushels of seed. He was as uneasy as Mr. May had been on the previous night, and in some respects even more unhappy; for he had no resource except a sort of dumb faith in his principal, a feeling that he must be able to find out some way of escape—chequered by clouds of despondency, sometimes approaching despair. For Cotsdean, too, felt vaguely that things were approaching a crisis—that a great many resources had been exhausted—that the pitcher which had gone so often to the well must, at last, be broken, and that it was as likely the catastrophe was coming now as at any other time. He said to himself, that never in his previous experience had things seemed so blank as at present; never had the moment of fate approached so nearly without any appearance of deliverance. He had not even the round of possibilities before him which were in

Mr. May's mind, however hopeless, at this particular moment, he might find them.

Cotsdean, for his part, had nothing to think of but Mr. May. Would he find some way out of it still, he who was always so clever, and must, in his position, have always "good friends?" How the poor man wished that he had never been led into this fatal course—that he had insisted, long ago, on the settlement which must come some time, and which did not get any easier by putting it off; but then, who was he to stand against his clergyman? He did not feel able now to make any stand against him. If he had to be ruined—he must be ruined: what could he do? The man who had brought him to this, held him in such subjection, that he could not denounce or accuse him even now. He was so much better, higher, abler, stronger than himself, that Cotsdean's harshest sentiment was a dumb feeling of injury; a feeling much more likely to

lead him to miserable tears than to resistance. His clergyman—how was he to stand against his clergyman? This was the burden of his thoughts. And still, perhaps, there might be salvation and safety in the resources, the power, and cleverness, and superior strength of the man for whom, in his humility, he had risked everything. Poor Cotsdean's eyes were red with sleeplessness and thinking, and the constant rubbings he administered with the sleeve of his rough coat. He hung helpless, in suspense, waiting to see what his chief would say to him; if he would send for him—if he would come. And in the intervals of these anxious thoughts, he asked himself should he tell poor Sally—should he prepare her for her fate? She and her children might be turned out of house and home, very probably would be, he said to himself, leaping to the extreme point as men, in his condition, are apt to do. They might take everything from him;

they might bring all his creditors on him in a heap; they might sell him up; his shop by which he made his daily bread, and everything he had, and turn his children out into the streets. Once more he rubbed his sleeve over his eyes, which were smarting with sleeplessness and easily coming tears. He turned over the pages of the ledger mechanically. There was no help in it—no large debts owing to him that could be called in; no means of getting any money; and nothing could he do but contemplate the miseries that might be coming, and wait, wait, wondering dully whether Mr. May was doing anything to avert this ruin, and whether, at any moment, he might walk in, bringing safety in the very look of his bold eyes. Cotsdean was not bold; he was small and weakly, and nervous, and trembled at a sharp voice. He was not a man adapted for vigorous struggling with the world. Mr. May could do it, in whose hands was the final issue. He was a man who was afraid of no one;

and whose powers nobody could deny. Surely now, even at the last moment, he would find help somehow. It seemed profane to entertain a doubt that he would be able to do it even at the very last.

But Cotsdean had a miserable morning; he could do nothing. Minute by minute, hour by hour, he waited to be called to the Parsonage; now and then he went out to the door of his shop and looked out wistfully down the street where it ended in the distance of Grange Lane. Was that the maid from the Parsonage coming up across the road? Were these the young ladies, who, though they knew nothing about the matter at issue, very frequently brought a note, or message, from their father to Cotsdean? But he was deceived in these guesses as well as in so many others. All the world seemed out of doors that morning, but nobody came. The ruddy sunshine shone full down the street glorifying it with rays of warm gold, and tinting the mists and clouds which lurked

in the corners. It had been heavy and overcast in the morning, but at noon the clouds had cleared away, and that big red globe of fire had risen majestically out of the mists, and everybody was out. But no one, except humble people in the ordinary way of business, came to Cotsdean. Bushels of grain for chickens, pennyworths of canary seed—oh ! did any one think he could pay a hundred pounds out of these ? —a hundred pounds, the spending of which had not been his, poor man, which was indeed spent long ago, and represented luxuries past and over, luxuries which were not Cotsdean's. Strange that a mere lump of money should live like this, long after it was, to all intents and purposes, dead, and spent and gone !

Then came the hour of dinner, when his Sally called him to the room behind the shop, from which came an odour of bacon and fine big beans—beans which were represented in his shop in many a sackfull. He went in unwillingly in obedience to her

command, but feeling unable to eat, soon left the table sending the young man to fill his place, with whose appetite no obstacle of care or thought interfered. Poor Cotsdean felt that the smell of the dinner made him sick—though he would have liked to eat had he been able—the smell of the bacon which he loved, and the sight of the small children whom he loved still better, and poor Sally, his wife, still red in the face from dishing it up. Sally was anxious about her husband's want of appetite.

“What ails you, John?” she said, pathetically; “it wasn't as you were out last night, nor nothing o' that sort. A man as is sober like you don't ought to turn at his dinner.”

She was half sorry, and half aggrieved, poor woman, feeling as some blame of her cookery must be involved.

“It's the bile,” said poor Cotsdean, with that simplicity of statement which is common in his class. “Don't you take on, Sally, I'll be a deal better by supper-

time——or worse,” he added to himself. Yes, he would make an effort to eat at supper-time; perhaps it might be the last meal he should eat in his own comfortable home.

He had been out at the shop door, gazing despairingly down the road; he had come in and sold some birdseed, wondering—oh what good would that penny do him—he who wanted a hundred pounds? and was standing listening with a sad heart to the sound of the knives and forks and chatter of the children, when suddenly all at once Mr. May walked into the shop, changing dismay into hope. What a thing it was to be a gentleman and a clergyman, Cotsdean could not but think! The very sight of Mr. May inspired him with courage; even though probably he had no money in his pocket, it was a supporting thing only to see him, and hear the sound of his free unrestrained step. He came in with a friendly nod to his humble helper; then he glanced round the shop,

to see that no one was present, and then he said, "All right, Cotsdean," in a voice that was as music to the little corn-factor's ears. His heart, which had been beating so low, jumped up in his bosom; his appetite came back with a leap; he asked himself would the bacon be cold? and cried "God be praised, Sir," in a breath.

Mr. May winced slightly; but why should it be wrong to be grateful to God in any circumstances, he asked himself? having become already somewhat composed in his ideas on this particular point.

"Are we quite alone?" he said. "Nobody within hearing? I have not brought you the money, but a piece of paper that is as good as the money. Take it: you will have no difficulty in discounting this; the man is as well known as the Carlingford Bank, and as safe, though I daresay you will be surprised at the name."

Cotsdean opened out the new bill with trembling hands. "Tozer!" he said faintly, between relief and dismay.

“Yes. You must know that I am taking a pupil—one who belongs to a very rich Dissenting family in London. Tozer knows something about him, from his connection with the body, and through this young man I have got to know something of *him*. He does it upon the admirable security of the fees I am to receive with this youth; so you see, after all, there is no mystery about it. Better not wait for to-morrow, Cotsdean. Go at once, and get it settled. You see,” said Mr. May, ingratiatingly, “it is a little larger than the other—one hundred and fifty, indeed—but that does not matter with such an excellent name.”

“Tozer!” said Cotsdean, once more bewildered. He handled the piece of paper nervously, and turned it upside down, and round about, with a sense that it might melt in his hold. He did not like the additional fifty added. Why should another fifty be added? but so it was, and there seemed nothing for him

but to take the immediate relief and be thankful.

“ I’d rather, Sir, as Tozer hadn’t known nothing about it; and why should he back a bill for me as ain’t one of my friends, nor don’t know nothing about me? and fifty more added on,” said Cotsdean. It was the nearest he had gone to standing up against his clergyman; he did not like it. To be Mr. May’s sole standbye and agent, even at periodical risk of ruin, was possible to him; but a pang of jealousy, alarm, and pain came into his mind when he saw the new name. This even obliterated the immediate sense of relief that was in his mind.

“ Come three months it’ll have to be paid,” said Cotsdean, “ and Tozer aint a man to stand it if he’s left to pay; he’d sell us up, Mr. May. He aint one of the patient ones, like—some other folks; and there’s fifty pound put on. I don’t see my way to it. I’d rather it was just the clear hundred, if it was the same to you.”

"It is not the same to me," said Mr. May, calmly. "Come, there is no cause to make any fuss. There it is, and if you don't like to make use of it, you must find some better way. Bring the fifty pounds, less the expenses, to me to-night. It is a good bit of paper, and it delivers us out of a mess which I hope we shall not fall into again."

"So you said afore, Sir," said the corn-factor, sullenly.

"Cotsdean, you forget yourself; but I can make allowance for your anxiety. Take it, and get it settled before the bank closes; pay in the money to meet the other bill, and bring me the balance. You will find no difficulty with Tozer's name; and what so likely as that one respectable tradesman should help another? By the way, the affair is a private one between us, and it is unnecessary to say anything to him about it; the arrangement you understand is between him and me."

"Beg your pardon, Sir," said Cotsdean,

with a deprecatory movement of his hand to his forehead; "but it is me as will be come upon first if anything happens, and that fifty pounds—"

"Have you ever found me to fail you, Cotsdean? If you knew the anxiety I have gone through, that you might be kept from harm, the sleepless nights, the schemes, the exertions! You may suppose it was no ordinary effort to ask a man like Tozer."

Cotsdean was moved by the touching tone in which his partner in trouble spoke; but terror gave him a certain power. He grumbled still, not altogether vanquished. "I don't say nothing against that, Sir," he said, not meeting Mr. May's eye; "but when it comes to be paid, Sir, I'm the first in it, and where is that other fifty to come from? That's what I'm a thinking for—for I'm the first as they'd haul up after all."

"You!" said Mr. May, "what could they get from you? You are not worth

powder and shot. Don't be ridiculous, my good fellow. I never avoid my responsibilities, as you know. I am as good, I hope, for that fifty as for all that went before. Have you ever known me leave you or any one in the lurch?"

"No, Sir, I can't say as—I don't suppose I have. I've always put my trust in you like in Providence itself," he cried, hastily, holding his breath.

"Then do as I tell you," said Mr. May, waving his hand with careless superiority; and though his heart was aching with a hundred anxious fears, he left the shop with just that mixture of partial offence and indifference which overawed completely his humble retainer. Cotsdean trembled at his own guilty folly and temerity. He did not dare to call his patron back again, to ask his pardon. He did not venture to go back to the table and snatch a bit of cold bacon. He was afraid he had offended his clergyman, what matter that he was hungry for his dinner? He called

the young man from the bacon, which was now cold and all but eaten up, and snatched at his hat and went out to the bank. It was all he could do.

CHAPTER IX.

A VISIT.

“**D**EAR MAY,
“ Young Copperhead, the young fellow whom you have undertaken to coach, is coming to the Hall for a few days before he enters upon his studies, and Anne wishes me to ask you to come over on Tuesday to dine and sleep, and to make acquaintance with him. You can carry him back with you if it suits you. In my private opinion, he is a cub, of the most disagreeable kind ; but the girls like his mother, who is a kind of cousin, as you know. It is not only because he has failed to take his degree (you know how I hate

the hideous slang in which this fact is generally stated), but that his father, who is one of the rich persons who abound in the lower circles of society, is ambitious, and would like to see him in Parliament, and that sort of thing—a position which cannot be held creditably without some sort of education: at least, so I am myself disposed to think. Therefore, your pleasing duty will be to get him up in a little history and geography, so that he may not get quite hopelessly wrong in any of the modern modifications of territory, for instance, and in so much Horace as may furnish him with a few stock quotations, in case he should be called upon, in the absence of any more hopeful neophyte, to move the Address. He is a great hulking fellow, not very brilliant, you may suppose, but not so badly mannered as he might be, considering his parentage. I don't think he'll give you much trouble in the house; but he will most probably bore you to death, and in that case your family ought

to have a claim, I should think, for compensation. Anyhow, come and see him, and us, before you begin your hard task.

“Very truly yours,

“R. DORSET.”

“Anne makes me open my letter to say that Ursula must come too. We will send a carriage to meet you at the station.”

This letter caused considerable excitement in the Parsonage. It was the first invitation to dinner which Ursula had ever received. The dinner-parties in Carlingford were little frequented by young ladies. The male population was not large enough to afford a balance for the young women of the place, who came together in the evening, and took all the trouble of putting on their pretty white frocks, only to sit in rows in the drawing-room, waiting till the old gentlemen came in from the dining-room, after which everybody went away. There were no young gentlemen to speak of in Carlingford, so that when anyone

was bold enough to attempt a dancing party, or anything of an equally amusing description, friends were sent out in all directions, as the beaters are sent into the woods to bring together the unfortunate birds for a *battue*, to find men. These circumstances will explain the flutter in Ursula's innocent bosom when her father read her that postscript. Mr. May was singularly amiable that day, a thing which happened at periodical intervals, usually after he had been specially "cross." On this occasion there was no black mark against him in the family reckoning, and yet he was more kind than anyone had ever known him. Instead of making any objections, he decided at once that Ursula must go, and told her to put on her prettiest frock, and make herself look very nice.

"You must let Anne Dorset see that you care to please her," he said. "Anne is a very good woman, and her approval is worth having."

“Oh, papa!” cried Janey, “when you are always calling her an old maid!”

“L’un n’empêche pas l’autre,” he said, which puzzled Janey, whose French was very deficient. Even Ursula, supposed to be the best French scholar in the family, was not quite sure what it meant; but it was evidently something in favour of Cousin Anne, which was sweet to the grateful girl.

Janey, though suffering bitterly under the miserable consciousness of being only fourteen, and not asked anywhere, helped with disinterested zeal to get her sister ready, and consoled herself by orders for unlimited muffins and cake for tea.

“There will only be the children,” she said, resignedly, and felt herself *incomprise*; but indeed, the attractions of a good romp afterwards, no one being in the house to restrain the spirits of the youthful party, made even Janey amends.

As for Reginald, who was not asked, he was, it must be allowed, rather sulky too,

and he could not solace himself either with muffins or romps. His rooms at the College were very pleasant rooms, but he was used to home; and though the home at the Parsonage was but faded, and not in such perfect order as it might have been, the young man felt even his wainscoted study dull without the familiar voices, the laughter and foolish family jokes, and even the little quarrels which kept life always astir. He walked with Ursula to the station, whither her little box with her evening dress had gone before her, in a half-affronted state of mind.

“What does he want with a pupil?” Reginald was saying, as he had said before. “A fellow no one knows, coming and taking possession of the house as if it belonged to him. There is plenty to do in the parish without pupils, and if I were not on the spot he would get into trouble, I can tell you. A man that has been ploughed, ‘a big hulking fellow,’ (Sir Robert says so, not I). Mind, I’ll have

no flirting, Ursula ; that is what always happens with a pupil in the house."

"Reginald, how dare you—"

"Oh, yes, I dare ; my courage is quite equal to facing you, even if you do shoot thunderbolts out of your eyes. Mind you, I won't have it. There is a set of fellows who try it regularly, and if you were above them, would go in for Janey ; and it would be great fun and great promotion for Janey ; she would feel herself a woman directly ; so you must mind her as well as yourself. I don't like it at all," Reginald went on. "Probably he will complain of the dinners you give him, as if he were in an inn. Confound him ! What my father means by it, I can't tell."

"Reginald, you ought not to swear," said Ursula. "It is dreadfully wicked in a clergyman. Poor papa meant making a little more money. What else could he mean ? And I think it is very good of him, for it will bother him most. Mr. Copperhead is very nice, Reginald. I saw

him in London, you know. I thought he was very ——”

“ Ah! oh!” said Reginald, “ I forgot that. You met him in London? To be sure, and it was there you met Miss Beecham. I begin to see. Is he coming here after her, I should like to know? She doesn’t look the sort of girl to encourage that sort of thing.”

“ The sort of girl to encourage that sort of thing! How strangely you talk when you get excited: isn’t that rather vulgar? I don’t know if he is coming after Miss Beecham or not,” said Ursula, who thought the suggestion uncalled for, “ but in a very short time you can judge for yourself.”

“ Ah—indignation!” said the big brother, who like most big brothers laughed at Ursula’s exhibition of offended dignity; “ and by the way, Miss Beecham—you have not seen her since that night when she was sent for. Will not she think it strange that you never sent to inquire?”

“ I sent Betsey—”

“ But if Miss Beecham had been somebody else, you would have gone yourself,” he said, being in a humour for finding fault. “ If poor old Mrs. Tozer had been what you call a lady—”

“ I thought you were much more strong than I am against the Dissenters ?” said Ursula, “ ever since that man’s speech ; and, indeed, always, as long as I can recollect.”

“ She is not a mere Dissenter,” said Reginald. “ I think I shall call as I go home. She is the cleverest girl I ever met ; not like one of you bread and butter girls, though she is not much older than you. A man finds a girl like that worth talking to,” said the young clergyman, holding himself erect. Certainly Reginald had not improved ; he had grown ever so much more self-important since he got a living of his own.

“ And if I was to say, ‘ Mind, I won’t have it, Reginald ?’ ” cried Ursula, half

laughing, half angry. "I think that is a great deal worse than a pupil. But Miss Beecham is very dignified, and you may be sure she will not think much of a call from you. Heaven be praised! that is one thing you can't get into your hands; we girls are always good for something there. Men may think themselves as grand as they please," said Ursula, "but their visits are of no consequence, it is ladies of the family who must *call*!" After this little outbreak, she came down at once to her usual calm. "I will ask Cousin Anne what I ought to do; I don't think Miss Beecham wanted me to go then—"

"I shall go," said Reginald, and he left Ursula in her father's keeping, who met them at the station, and went off at once, with a pleasant sense of having piqued her curiosity, to Grange Lane.

It was still early, for the trains which stopped at the little country station next to the Hall, were very few and inconve-

nient, and the sun, though setting, was still shining red from over St. Roque's upon Grange Lane. The old red walls grew redder still in the frosty night, and the sky began to bloom into great blazing patches of colour upon the wintry clearness of the blue. There was going to be a beautiful sunset, and such a thing was always to be seen from Grange Lane better than anywhere else in Carlingford. Reginald went down the road slowly, looking at it, and already almost forgetting his idea of calling on Miss Beecham. To call on Miss Beecham would be to call on old Tozer, the butterman, to whom alone the visit would be naturally paid; and this made him laugh within himself. So he would have passed, no doubt, without the least attempt at intruding on the privacy of the Tozers, had not the garden door opened before he got so far, and Phœbe herself come out, with her hands in her muff, to take a little walk up and down as she did daily. She did not take

her hand out of its warm enclosure to give it to him; but nodded with friendly ease in return to his salutation.

"I have come out to see the sunset," said Phœbe; "I like a little air before the day is over, and grandmamma, when she is poorly, likes her room to be very warm."

"I hope Mrs. Tozer is better. I hope you have not been anxious."

"Oh, no! it is chronic; there is no danger. But she requires a great deal of attendance; and I like to come out when I can. Oh, how fine it is! what colour! I think, Mr. May, you must have a *spécialité* for sunsets at Carlingford. I never saw them so beautiful anywhere else."

"I am glad there is something you like in Carlingford."

"Something! there is a very great deal; and that I don't like too," she said with a smile. "I don't care for the people I am living among, which is dreadful. I don't suppose you have ever had such

an experience, though you must know a great deal more in other ways than I. All the people that come to inquire about grandmamma are very kind; they are as good as possible; I respect them, and all that, but—— Well, it must be my own fault, or education. It is education, no doubt, that gives us those absurd ideas.”

“Don’t call them absurd,” said Reginald, “indeed I can enter into them perfectly well. I don’t *know* them, perhaps, in my own person; but I can perfectly understand the repugnance, the distress——”

“The words are too strong,” said Phœbe, “not so much as that; the—annoyance, perhaps, the nasty little disagreeable struggle with one’s self and one’s pride; as if one were better than other people. I dislike myself, and despise myself for it; but I can’t help it. We have so little power over ourselves.”

“I hope you will let my sister do what she can to deliver you,” said Reginald,

“ Ursula is not like you ; but she is a good little thing, and she is able to appreciate you. I was to tell you she had been called suddenly off to the Dorsets’, with whom my father and she have gone to pass the night—to meet, I believe, a person you know.”

“ Oh, Clarence Copperhead ; he is come then ? How odd it will be to see him here. His mother is nice, but his father is—— Oh, Mr. May ! if you only knew the things people have to put up with. When I think of Mr. Copperhead, and his great, ugly, staring wealth, I feel disposed to hate money—especially among Dissenters. It would be better if we were all poor.”

Reginald said nothing ; he thought so too. In that case there would be a few disagreeable things out of a poor clergyman’s way, and assaults like that of Northcote upon himself would be impossible ; but he could scarcely utter these virtuous sentiments.

“ Poverty is the desire of ascetics, and this is not an ascetic age,” he said at

length, with a half laugh at himself for his stiff speech.

“ You may say it is not an ascetic age ; but yet I suppose the Ritualists——. Perhaps you are a Ritualist yourself, Mr. May ? I know as little personally about the church here, as you do about Salem Chapel. I like the service—so does papa—and I like above all things the independent standing of a clergyman ; the feeling he must have that he is free to do his duty. That is why I like the church ; for other things of course I like our own body best.”

“ I don’t suppose such things can be argued about, Miss Beecham. I wish I knew something of my father’s new pupil. I don’t like having a stranger in the house ; my father is fond of having his own way.”

“ It is astonishing how often parents are so,” said Phœbe, demurely ; “ and the way they talk of their experience ! as if each new generation did not know more than the one that preceded it.”

“ You are pleased to laugh, but I am quite in earnest. A pupil is a nuisance. For instance, no man who has a family should ever take one. I know what things are said.”

“ You mean about the daughters ? That is true enough, there are always difficulties in the way ; but you need not be afraid of Clarence Copperhead. He is not the fascinating pupil of a church-novel. There’s nothing the least like the Heir of Redclyffe about him.”

“ You are very well up in Miss Yonge’s novels, Miss Beecham.”

“ Yes,” said Phœbe ; “ one reads Scott for Scotland (and a few other things), and one reads Miss Yonge for the church. Mr. Trollope is good for that too, but not so good. All that I know of clergymen’s families I have got from her. I can recognize you quite well, and your sister, but the younger ones puzzle me ; they are not in Miss Yonge ; they are too much like other children, too naughty. I

don't mean anything disagreeable. The babies in Miss Yonge are often very naughty too, but not the same. As for you, Mr. May——”

“ Yes. As for me ?”

“ Oh, I know everything about you. You are a fine scholar, but you don't like the drudgery of teaching. You have a fine mind, but it interferes with you continually. You have had a few doubts—just enough to give a piquancy; and now you have a great ideal, and mean to do many things that common clergymen don't think of. That was why you hesitated about the chaplaincy? See how much I have got out of Miss Yonge. I know you as well as if I had known you all my life; a great deal better than I know Clarence Copperhead; but then, no person of genius has taken any trouble about him.”

“ I did not know I had been a hero of fiction,” said Reginald, who had a great mind to be angry. All this time they were walking briskly back and forward before

Tozer's open door, the Anglican, in his long black coat, following the lively movements of Tozer's granddaughter, only because he could not help himself. He was irritated, yet he was pleased. A young man is pleased to be thought of, even when the notice is but barely complimentary. Phoebe must have thought of him a good deal before she found him out in this way; but he was irritated all the same.

"You are however," she answered lightly. "Look at that blaze of crimson, Mr. May; and the blue, which is so clear and so unfathomable. Winter is grander than summer, and even warmer—to look at; with its orange, and purple, and gold. What poor little dirty dingy things we are down here, to have all this exhibited every evening for our delight!"

"That is true," he said; and as he gazed, something woke in the young man's heart—a little thrill of fancy, if not of love. It

is hard to look at a beautiful sunset, and then see it reflected in a girl's face, and not to feel something—which may be nothing, perhaps. His heart gave a small jump, not much to speak of. Phœbe did not talk like the other young ladies in Grange Lane.

“Mr. May, Mr. May!” she cried suddenly, “please go away! I foresee a disastrous encounter which alarms me. You can't fight, but there is no saying what you might do to each other. Please go away!”

“What is the matter?” he said. “I don't understand any encounter being disastrous here. Why should I go away?”

She laughed, but there was a certain fright in her tone. “Please!” she said, “I see Mr. Northcote coming this way. He will stop to speak to me. It is the gentleman who attacked you in the Meeting. Mr. May,” she added entreatingly, between laughter and fright, “do go, please.”

“I shall do nothing of the kind,” said Reginald, roused; “I am not afraid. Let

him come on. This wall shall fly from its firm base as soon as I."

Phoebe clasped her hands in dismay, which was partially real. "The typical churchman," she said, with a glance at Reginald's figure, which was not displeasing to him, "and the typical Dissenter! and what am I to do between them? Oh, I wish you would go away."

"Not an inch," said the young champion. Phoebe was frightened, but she was delighted. "I shall introduce him to you," she said, threatening.

"I don't mind," he replied; "nothing on earth should induce me to fly."

CHAPTER X.

TEA.

NOW here was a business ! The typical Anglican and the typical Dissenter, as Phœbe said, with only that clever young woman to keep them from flying at each other's throats ; the one obstinately holding his place by her side (and Phœbe began to have a slight consciousness that, being without any chaperon, she ought not to have kept Reginald May at her side ; but in the Tozer world, who knew anything of chaperons ?) the other advancing steadily, coming up the Lane out of the glow of the sunset, showing square against it in his frock-coat and high hat,

formal and demagogical, not like his rival. The situation pleased Phœbe, who liked to “manage;” but it slightly frightened her as well, though the open door behind, and the long garden with its clouds of crocuses, was a city of refuge always within reach.

• “Is it really you, Mr. Northcote?” she said. “You look as if you had dropped out of that lovely sunset I have been watching so long—and I thought you were at the other end of the world.”

“I have been at the other end of England, which comes to the same thing,” said Northcote, in a voice which was harsh by nature, and somewhat rough with cold; “and now they have sent me back to Salem Chapel, to take Mr. Thorpe’s place for three months. They asked for me, I believe; but that you must know better than I do.”

It was not in the nature of man not to be a little proud in the circumstances, and it is quite possible that he considered

Phœbe to have something to do with the flattering request.

“No, I had not heard ; but I am glad,” said Phœbe ; “and if it is not wicked to say so, I am glad Mr. Thorpe is to be away. Let us hope it will do him good. I am sure it will do the rest of us good, at all events.”

Northcote made no answer ; but he looked at the other, and several questions began to tremble on his lips. That this was a Churchman did not immediately occur to him ; for, indeed, various young pastors of his own body put on the livery which he himself abjured, and the sight of it as a servile copy filled him with a certain contempt.

“Mr. May has been stopped in his way by the beauty of the skies,” said Phœbe, rather enjoying the position as she got used to it. “Mr. Northcote—Mr. May. It is not easy to pass such an exhibition as that, is it?—and given to us all for love, and nothing for reward,” she added ; for she was a well read young woman, and

did not hesitate to suffer this to appear.

And then there was a momentary pause. Northcote was confused, it must be allowed, by thus coming face to face, without previous warning, with the man whom he had so violently assailed. Reginald had the best of it in every way, for he was the man injured, and had it in his power to be magnanimous ; and he had the advantage of full warning, and had prepared himself. Besides, was not he the superior by every social rule ? And that consciousness is always sweet.

“ If Mr. Northcote is new to Carlingford, he will probably not know what a fine point of view we have here. That, like so many other things,” said Reginald, pointedly, “ wants a little personal experience to find it out.”

“ For that matter, to see it once is as good as seeing it a hundred times,” said Northcote, somewhat sharply ; for to give in was the very last thing he thought of. A little glow of anger came over him.

He thought Phœbe had prepared this ordeal for him, and he was vexed, not only because she had done it, but because his sense of discomfiture might afford a kind of triumph to that party in the connection which was disposed, as he expressed it, to "toady the Church."

"Pardon me, I don't think you can judge of anything at a first view."

"And, pardon me, I think you see everything most sharply and clearly at a first view," said the Nonconformist, who was the loudest; "certainly in all matters of principle. After a while, you are persuaded against your will to modify this opinion and that, to pare off a little here, and tolerate a little there. Your first view is the most correct."

"Well," said Phœbe, throwing herself into the breach, "I am glad you don't agree, for the argument is interesting. Will you come in and fight it out? You shall have some tea, which will be pleasant, for it shall be hot. I really cannot

stay out any longer ; it is freezing here.”

The new-comer prepared to follow ; but Reginald hesitated. Pride whispered that to go into the house of Tozer, the butterman, was something monstrous ; but then it might be amusing. This “Dissenting fellow,” no doubt, was a drawback ; but a kind of angry antagonism and disdain half attracted him even to the Dissenting fellow. It might be well, on the whole, to see what kind of being such a person was. All curious phenomena are attractive to a student. “The proper study of mankind is man,” Reginald said to himself. Before he had got through this little argument with himself, Phœbe had gone in, and Northcote, whose disgust at the interposition of an adversary had no such softening of curiosity, followed her abruptly, without any of those graces which are current in society. This rudeness offended the other, who was about to walk on indignant, when Phœbe turned back, and looked out at him from the open door.

“Are not you coming, Mr. May?” she said, softly, looking at him with the least little shrug of her shoulders.

Reginald yielded without further resistance. But he felt fully that to see him, the chaplain of the old College, walking down through Tozer’s garden, between the two rows of closed up crocuses which glimmered ghostly by the side of the path, was one of the strangest sights in the world.

Phœbe, to tell the truth, was a little confused as to where to convey her captive, out of whom she meant to get a little amusement for the long winter afternoon. For a girl of her active mind, it may easily be imagined that a succession of long days with Mrs. Tozer was somewhat monotonous. She did her duty like a hero, and never complained; but still, if a little amusement was possible, it was worth having. She carried in her two young men as naughty boys carry stag-beetles, or other such small deer. If they would

fight it would be fun; and if they would not fight, why it might be fun still, and more amusing than grandmamma. She hesitated between the chilly drawing-room, where a fire was lighted, but where there was no evidence of human living, and the cozy parlour, where Mrs. Tozer sat in her best cap, still wheezy, but convalescent, waiting for her tea, and not indisposed to receive such deputations of the community as might come to ask for her. Finally, Phœbe opened the door of that sanctuary, which was dazzling with bright firelight after the gloom outside. It was a very comfortable interior, arranged by Phœbe to suit her own ideas rather than those of grandmamma, though grandmamma's comfort had been her chief object. The tea-things were sparkling upon the table, the kettle singing by the fire, and Mrs. Tozer half dozing in the tranquillity and warmth.

“Grandmamma, I have brought Mr.

May and Mr. Northcote to see you," she said.

The poor old lady almost sprang from her chair in amazement.

"Lord bless us, Phœbe, Mr. May!"

"Don't disturb yourself, grandmamma; they will find seats. Yes, we were all looking at the sunset, and as I knew tea must be ready—I know you want it, dear granny—I asked them to have some. Here it is, as I told you, quite hot, and very fragrant this cold night. How cold it is outside! I think it will freeze, and that skating may come off at last, Mr. May, that you were talking of, you remember? You were to teach your sisters to skate."

"Yes, with the advantage of your example."

Reginald had put himself in a corner, as far away as possible from the old woman in the chair. His voice, he felt, had caught a formal tone. As for the other, his antagonist, he had assumed the front of the battle—even, in Tozer's absence, he

had ventured to assume the front of the fire. He was not the sort of man Reginald had expected, almost hoped to see—a fleshy man, loosely put together, according to the nature, so far as he knew it, of Dissenters; but a firmly knit, clean-limbed young man, with crisp hair curling about his head, and a gleam of energy and spirit in his eye. The gentler Anglican felt by no means sure of a speedy victory, even of an intellectual kind. The young man before him did not look a slight antagonist. They glared at each other, measuring their strength; they did not know, indeed, that they had been brought in here to this warmth and light, like the stag-beetles, to make a little amusement for Phœbe; but they were quite ready to fight all the same.

“Mr. Northcote, Sir, I’m glad to see you. Now this is friendly; this is what I calls as it should be, when a young pastor comes in and makes free, without waiting for an invitation,” said Tozer kindly,

bustling in; "that speech of yours, Sir, was a rouser: that 'it 'em off, that did, and you can see as the connection ain't ungrateful. What's that you say, Phœbe? what? I'm a little hard of hearing. Mr.—May!"

"Mr. May was good enough to come in with me, grandpapa. We met at the door. We have mutual friends, and you know how kind Miss May has been," said Phœbe, trembling with sudden fright, while Reginald, pale with rage and embarrassment, stood up in his corner. Tozer was embarrassed too. He cleared his throat and rubbed his hands, with a terrible inclination to raise one of them to his forehead. It was all that he could do to get over this class instinct. Young May, though he had been delighted to hear him assailed in the Meeting, was a totally different visitor from the clever young pastor whom he received with a certain consciousness of patronage. Tozer did not know that the Northcotes were

infinitely richer, and quite as well born and well bred in their way as the Mays, and that his young Dissenting brother was a more costly production, as well as a more wealthy man, than the young chaplain in his long coat; but if he had known this it would have made no difference. His relation to the one was semi-servile, to the other condescending and superior. In Reginald May's presence, he was but a buttermilk who supplied the family; but to Horace Northcote he was an influential member of society, with power over a Minister's individual fate.

“I assure you, Sir, as I'm proud to see you in my house,” he said, with a duck of his head, and an ingratiating but uncomfortable smile. “Your father, I hope, as he's well, Sir, and all the family? We are a kind of neighbours now; not as we'd think of taking anything upon us on account of living in Grange Lane. But Phoebe here—Phoebe junior, as we call her—she's a cut above us, and I'm proud

to see any of her friends in my 'umble 'ouse. My good lady, Sir," added Tozer, with another duck, indicating with a wave of his hand his wife, who had already once risen, wheezy, but knowing her manners, to make a kind of half bow, half curtsy from her chair.

"You are very kind," said Reginald, feeling himself blush furiously, and not knowing what to say. The other young man stood with his back to the fire, and a sneer, which he intended to look like a smile, on his face.

And as for Phœbe, it must be allowed that, notwithstanding all her resources, even she was exquisitely uncomfortable for a minute or two. The young people all felt this, but to Tozer it seemed that he had managed everything beautifully, and a sense of elation stole over him. To be visited in this manner by the gentry, "making free," and "quite in a friendly way," was an honour he had never looked

for. He turned to Northcote with great affability and friendliness.

"Well," he said, "Mr. Northcote, Sir, it can't be denied as this is a strange meeting; you and Mr. May, as might'nt be, perhaps, just the best of friends, to meet quite comfortable over a cup of tea. But ain't it the very best thing that could happen? Men has their public opinions, Sir, as everyone should speak up bold for, and stick to; that's my way of thinking. But I wouldn't bring it no further; not, as might be said, into the domestic circle. I'm clean against that. You say your say in public, whatever you may think on a subject, but you don't bear no malice; it ain't a personal question; them's my sentiments. And I don't know nothing more elevatin', nothing more consolin', than for two public opponents, as you may say, to meet like this, quite cozy and comfortable, over a cup o' tea."

"It is a pleasure, I assure you, which I

appreciate highly," said Reginald, finding his voice.

"And which fills me with delight and satisfaction," said Northcote. Those stag beetles which Phœbe, so to speak, had carried in in her handkerchief, were only too ready to fight.

"You had better have some tea first," she said breathless, "before you talk so much of its good effects. Sit down, grandpapa, and have your muffin while it is hot; I know that is what you like. Do you care about china, Mr. May? but everyone cares for china nowadays. Look at that cup, and fancy, grandmamma having this old service in use without knowing how valuable it is. Cream Wedgwood! You may fancy how I stared when I saw it; and in every day use! most people put it up on brackets, when they are so lucky as to possess any. Tell Mr. May, grandmamma, how you picked it up. Mr. Northcote, there is an article in this review that I want you to look at.

Papa sent it to me. It is too metaphysical for me, but I know you are great in metaphysics—”

“I am greater in china; may not I look at the Wedgwood first?”

“Perhaps you will turn over the literature to me,” said Reginald, “reviews are more in my way than teacups, though I say it with confusion. I know how much I am behind my age.”

“And I too,” whispered Phœbe, behind the book which she had taken up. “Don’t tell anyone. It is rare, I know; and everybody likes to have something that is rare; but I don’t really care for it the least in the world. I have seen some bits of Italian faience indeed—but English pottery is not like Italian, any more than English skies.”

“You have the advantage of me, Miss Beecham, both as regards the pottery and the skies.”

“Ah, if it is an advantage; bringing poetry down to prose is not always an

advantage, is it? Italy is such a dream—so long as one has never been there.”

“Yes, it is a dream,” said Reginald, with enthusiasm, “to everybody, I think, but when one has little money and much work all one’s life—poverty stands in the way of all kinds of enjoyment.”

“Poverty is a nice friendly sort of thing; a ground we can all meet on,” said Phœbe. “But don’t let us say that to grandpapa. How odd people are! he knows you are not Croesus, but still he has a sort of feeling that you are a young prince, and do him the greatest honour in coming to his house; and yet, all the same, he thinks that money is the very grandest thing in existence. See what prejudice is! He would not allow that he had any class-reverence, and yet he can no more get rid of it—”

“Miss Beecham, it is very difficult for me to say anything on such a subject.”

“Very difficult, and you show your delicacy by not saying anything. But

you know, apart from this, which is not gratifying, I am rather proud of grand-papa's way of looking at some things. About saying out your opinions in public, and yet bearing no malice, for instance. Now, Mr. Northcote is the very Antipodes to you; therefore you ought to know him and find out what he means. It would be better for you both. That is what I call enlarging the mind," said Phoebe with a smile; which was, to tell the truth, a very pretty smile, and filled with a soft lustre the blue eyes with which she looked at him. Whether it was this, or the cogency of her argument, that moved the young Anglican, it would be hard to say.

"If you are to be the promoter of this new science, I don't object to studying under you," he said with a great deal of meaning in his voice.

Phoebe gave him another smile, though she shook her head; and then she turned to the hero on the other side.

“Is it genuine, Mr. Northcote? is it as fine as I thought? There now, I told you, grandmamma! Have you been telling Mr. Northcote how you picked it up? I am sure you will present him with a cup and saucer for his collection in return for his praises.”

“Not for the world,” said Northcote, with profound seriousness, “break a set of cream Wedgwood! what do you take me for, Miss Beecham? I don’t mean to say that I would not give my ears to have it—all; but to break the set—”

“Oh, I beg your pardon! I was not prepared for such delicacy of feeling—such conscientiousness—”

“Ah!” said Northcote, with a long drawn breath, I don’t think you can understand the feelings of an enthusiast. A set of fine China is like a poem—every individual bit is necessary to the perfection of the whole. I allow that this is not the usual way of looking at it; but my pleasure lies in seeing it entire, making the tea-

table into a kind of lyric, elevating the family life by the application of the principles of abstract beauty to its homeliest details. Pardon, Miss Beecham, but Mrs. Tozer is right, and you are wrong. The idea of carrying off a few lines of a poem in one's pocket for one's collection—"

"Now that's what I call speaking up," said Mrs. Tozer, the first time she had opened her lips, "that's just what I like. Mr. Northcote has a deal more sense than the like of you. He knows what's what. Old things like this as might have been my granny's, they're good enough for every day, they're very nice for common use; but they ain't no more fit to be put away in cupboards and hoarded up like fine china, no more than I am. Mr. Northcote should see our best—that's worth the looking at; and if I'd known as the gentleman was coming—but you can't put an old head on young shoulders. Phoebe's as good as gold, and the trouble she takes with an old woman like me, is

wonderful; but she can't be expected to think of everything, can she now, at her age?"

The two young men laughed—it was the first point of approach between them, and Phœbe restrained a smile, giving them a look from one to another. She gave Reginald his cup of tea very graciously.

"Mr. Northcote prefers the Wedgwood, and Mr. May doesn't mind, grandmamma," she said sweetly. "So it is as well to have the best china in the cupboard. Grandpapa, another muffin—it is quite hot; and I know that is what you like best."

"Well, I'll say that for Phœbe," said Tozer, with his mouth full, "that whether she understands china or not I can't tell, but she knows what a man likes, which is more to the purpose for a young woman. That's what she does; and looks after folk's comforts as I never yet saw her match. She's a girl in a thousand, is Phœbe junior. There be them as is more for dress," he

added, fond and greasy, looking at her seated modestly in that gown, which had filled with awe and admiration the experienced mind of Mrs. Sam Hurst; “and plays the pianny, and that sort of style of girl: but for one as minds the comforts of them about her——” Tozer turned back to the table, and made a gulp of his last piece of muffin. Eloquence could have no more striking climax; the proof of all his enthusiasm, was it not there?

“Don’t you play, Miss Beecham?” said Reginald, half amused, half angry.

“A little,” said Phœbe, with a laugh. She had brought down a small cottage piano out of the drawing-room, where nobody ever touched it, into a dark corner out of reach of the lamp. It was the only accomplishment upon which she prided herself. She got up from the table, when she had poured out another cup of tea for her grandfather, and without saying a word went to the little piano. It was not much of an instrument, and Reginald May was

very little of a connoisseur. Northcote, who knew her gifts, gave himself up to listening, but the Tozers looked on, shaking their heads, and it was only after some time had passed, that Reginald began to understand that he was listening to something which he had never heard before. Ursula's school-girl tunes had never interested him very much; he did not know what this was which seemed to creep into his heart by his ears. He got up by-and-by, and stole towards the piano bewildered.

"It'll soon be over, Sir," said Tozer, encouragingly. "Don't you run away, Mr. May. Them are queer tunes, I allow, but they don't last long, and your company's an honour. As for the playing, it'll soon be over; you needn't run away."

CHAPTER XI.

THE HALL.

IT is unnecessary to say that the dinner-party in the Hall bore very little resemblance to those simple amusements in No. 6, Grange Lane. There were three or four people to meet Mr. May, who, as an orator and literary man, had greater reputation even such a little way from home than he had in his own town. He was a very good preacher, and those articles of his were much admired as “thoughtful” papers, searching into many mental depths, and fathoming the religious soul with wonderful insight. Ladies especially admired them; the ladies who

were intellectual, and found pleasure in the feeling of being more advanced than their neighbours. The Rector's wife of the parish in which the Dorsets lived, applied herself with great vigour to the art of drawing him out. She asked him questions with that air of delightful submission to an intellectual authority which some ladies love to assume, and which it pleases many men to accept. His daughters were not at all reverential of Mr. May, and it soothed him to get marks of devotion and literary submission out of doors. Even Sophy Dorset had gone through the phase of admiration for her cousin. This had been dissipated, it is true, long ago ; but yet she did not laugh, as she usually did, at the believers in him. She listened to Mrs. Rector plying him with eager questions, asking his advice on that point and the other, and smiled, but was charitable. As for Cousin Anne, she was charitable by nature, and all the world got the advantage of it. Little Ursula

was one of her prime favourites—a motherless girl, who was the eldest, and who had to work for the family, was of all others the thing which moved her sympathies most. The little Indian children had long ere this yielded to the charms of Aunt Anne. They followed her wherever she went like little spaniels, hanging on by her dress. She had to go up to the nursery to hear them say their prayers before she dressed for dinner.

“You see, this is a proof that with children one should never be discouraged,” she said; “for they did not take to me at first;” and she turned her mild countenance, beaming with soft light, upon Ursula. To be hampered by these babies clinging about her, to have them claiming imperiously her attention and her time, however she might be engaged; to give up to them the moments of leisure in which otherwise she might have had a little quiet and repose, this was what Anne Dorset considered as her recompense.

“ Oh, I wish I could be as good to Amy and Robin ! But I feel as if I should like to shake them often,” cried Ursula, “ even though I love them with all my heart. Oh ! Cousin Anne, I don’t think there is anyone like you.”

“ Yes, that is what she thinks her reward,” said Sophy. “ I should like something better, if it was I. Don’t copy her, Ursula. It is better to have children of your own, and get other people to nurse them. Anne, you see, likes it. I want you to marry, and get all the good things in this life. Let us leave the self-denials to her ; she likes them, you perceive.”

“ I don’t know why you should always talk of marrying to me, Cousin Sophy,” said Ursula, with gentle reproach. “ I hope I am not a girl to think of such things.”

“ And why not ? Is it not the first duty of woman, you little simpleton ?” said Sophy Dorset, with a laugh.

But Ursula could not imagine that it

was only in this general way that her cousin spoke. She could not but feel that this big Clarence Copperhead, with the diamond buttons, and that huge expanse of shirt-front, had something to do with Sophy's talk. There was six feet of him, which is a thing that goes a long way with a girl; and he was not bad-looking. And why did he come to Carlingford, having nothing in the world to do with the place? and coming to Carlingford, why was papa sought out, of all people, to be his tutor? Certainly the circumstances were such as invited conjecture, especially when added on to Sophy's allusions. He took Ursula in to dinner, which fluttered her somewhat; and though he was much intent upon the dinner itself, and studied the *menu* with a devotion which would have made her tremble for her housekeeping, had she been sufficiently disengaged to notice it, he yet found time to talk a little between the courses.

“I did not expect, when I saw you in

London, that we were to meet again so soon, Miss May," was the perfectly innocent remark with which he opened the conversation.

Ursula would have said it herself had he not said it, and all she could do was to answer, "No, indeed," with a smile.

"And I am coming to your father to be coached," continued the young man. "It is a funny coincidence, don't you think so? I am glad you came to that ball, Miss May. It makes me feel that I know you. I don't like starting off afresh, all at once, among people I don't know."

"No," said Ursula; "I should not like it either. But there are other people you know in Carlingford. There is the young lady who was at the ball—the young lady in black, I used to call her—Miss Beecham; you must know her better than you know me."

"Who, Phœbe? really!" he said, elevating his eyebrows. "Phœbe in Carlingford! By Jove! how the governor will

laugh ! I should like to know," with a conscious smile on his countenance, "what *she* is doing there."

"Her grandmamma is ill, and she is nursing her," said Ursula, simply, at which young Copperhead laughed again.

"Oh, that is how it is ! Very good of her, don't you think ? Shouldn't suppose she would be amusing, the old granny, and Phœbe likes to be amused. I must go to see her as soon as I can get there. You know, we are Dissenters at home, Miss May. Good joke, isn't it ? The governor will not hear a word against them. As a matter of fact, nobody does go to chapel in our rank of life ; but the governor sometimes is as obstinate as an old pig."

"I suppose he likes it best," said Ursula, gently ; and here a new course came round, and for the moment Clarence had something else to do. He resumed after the *entrées*, which were poor, as he made a mental note.

"Is there anything to do at Carlingford,

Miss May? I hope you skate. I am not much in the hunting way; nor your father, I suppose? for, to be sure, a hunting parson would never do. I'm too heavy a weight for most horses, and the good of galloping over the country all day, after a poor brute of a fox!—but we must not say that before Sir Robert. I suppose it *is* dull?" he said, somewhat pathetically, looking in her face.

"We don't think it dull, Mr. Copperhead. It may be, perhaps, for a gentleman."

"That's it," said Clarence. "I don't know if it's because women have more resources, or because they want less; but you always get on better than we do, somehow; very lucky for you. You don't expect so much. I believe that's what it is."

"Then that shows we are the most sensible," said Ursula, roused, and a little indignant.

He paused, to make his choice between

the inevitable turkey and the inevitable beef.

“ I hope it’s braised,” he said, in a devout undertone. “ You don’t expect so much, Miss May, that’s what it is ; you’re always in the house. You don’t care for exercise. Bless you, if I didn’t take exercise, I should be fifteen stone before you could turn round. How much are you ? about eight, perhaps, not much more. That makes a deal of difference : you don’t require to keep yourself down.”

Ursula did not make any answer. She was prepared to look upon him very favourably, and accept what he said as full of originality and force ; but the tone the conversation had taken was not entirely to her mind. Phœbe could have managed it ; but Ursula was not Phœbe. She was more disposed to take offence at the young man’s tone, than to guide it into better ways.

“ I hope your mother is well,” she said at last, falteringly, after a long pause.

Ursula thought her companion would remark this pause, and think her displeased. She might have saved herself the trouble, for it was the braised turkey which kept Clarence quiet, not offence.

“Oh, quite well, I thank you. Not so well as when I am at home; she don’t like parting with me,” he said, “but, of course, I can’t be always at my mother’s apron-strings. Women forget that.”

“She was very kind when I was in London.”

“Yes, that just pleases her; she is never so happy as when she is buying things for somebody,” he replied, betraying an acquaintance with the exact manner of the kindness which somewhat disturbed poor Ursula; “that is exactly her way. I daresay she’ll come and see the Dorsets while I’m here.”

Then there was again a pause, and Clarence turned to speak to some one at his other side.

“No, I don’t hunt much,” he said; “I

have come into the country to be coached. My father's a modern sort of man, and wants a fellow to be up in history, and that sort of thing. Bore—yes; and I daresay Carlingford is very dull. Oh, yes, I will go out with the hounds now and then, if there is not a frost. I should rather like a frost for my part."

It was a hunting lady who had started this new conversation, into which the stranger drifted away, leaving Ursula stranded. She was slightly piqued, it must be allowed, and when Sophy asked her after dinner how she liked her companion, made a dignified reply.

"I have no doubt he is very nice," she said; "I don't know much of gentlemen. He talks of papa as if he were a school-master, and thinks Carlingford will be dull."

"So it is, Ursula I have often heard you say so."

"Yes, perhaps; but a stranger ought to be civil," said the girl, offended; and she

went and entrenched herself by the side of Cousin Anne, where the new pupil could not come near her. Indeed he did not seem very anxious to do so, as Ursula soon saw. She blushed very hotly all by herself, under Cousin Anne's shadow : that she could have been so absurd as ever to think— But his size, and the weight over which he had lamented, and his abundant whiskers and large shirt front, made it quite impossible for Ursula to think of him as a person to be educated. It must be Miss Beecham, she said to herself.

No thoughts of this kind crossed Mr. Clarence Copperhead's mind, as he stretched his big limbs before the drawing-room fire after dinner, and said "Brava!" when the ladies sang. He knew "Brava" was the right thing to say. He liked to be at the Hall, which he had never visited before, and to know that it was undeniable gentry which surrounded him, and which at the piano was endeavouring to gain his approbation. He was so much his father's

son that he had a sense of pleasure and triumph in being thus elevated; and he had a feeling, more or less, of contempt for the clergyman, “only a parson,” who was to be his coach. He felt the power and the beauty of money almost as much as his father did. What was there he could not buy with it? the services of the most learned pundit in existence, for what was learning? or the prettiest woman going to be his wife, if that was what he wanted. It may be supposed then that he had very little attention indeed to bestow upon a girl like Ursula, who was only the daughter of his coach—nobody at all in particular—and that her foolish fancies on the subject might have been spared. He aired himself on the hearth-rug with great satisfaction, giving now and then a shake to one of his long limbs, and a furtive glance to see that all was perfect in the *sit* of the garment that clothed it. He had been ploughed it is true, but that did not interfere much with

his mental satisfaction; for, after all, scholarship was a thing cultivated chiefly by dons and prigs, and poor men; and no doubt this other poor man, the parson, would be able to put all into his head that was necessary, just as much as would pay, and no more—a process, the mere thought of which made Clarence yawn, yet which he had wound up his noble mind to submit to.

“Mind you I don’t say I am going to work,” he had said to his mother; “but if you think he can put it into me, he may try,” and he repeated much the same sentiment, with a difference, to Sophy Dorset, who by way of civility, while the Rector’s wife paid court to Mr. May, talked to Clarence a little, from the corner of the ottoman close to the fire.

“Work! well I suppose so after a sort. I don’t mean to make myself ill with midnight oil and that sort of thing,” he said (he was not at all clear in his mind as to how the midnight oil was applied), “but

if Mr. May can get it into me, I'll give him leave; for one thing I suppose there will be nothing else to do."

"Not much in Carlingford; there are neither pictures, nor museums, nor fine buildings, nor anything of the sort; and very little society, a few tea-parties, and one ball in the season."

Mr. Clarence Copperhead shrugged his large shoulders.

"I shan't go to the tea-parties, that's certain," he said, "a fellow must hunt a little, I suppose, as the place is so destitute. As for pictures and museums, that don't trouble me. The worst of going abroad is that you've always got to look at things of that sort. To have to do it at home would be beyond a joke."

"Have you seen the box of curious things John sent me with the children," said Sophy. "They are on the table at the end of the room, yataghans, and I don't know what other names they have, all sorts of Indian weapons. I should

think you would be interested in them."

"Thanks, Cousin Sophy, I am very well where I am," he said. He looked at her in such a way that she might have appropriated this remark as a compliment, had she pleased; but Sophy laughed, and it is to be feared did not feel the compliment, for she turned right round to somebody else, and took no more notice of Clarence. He was so fully satisfied with himself that he had not any strong sense of neglect, though he had but little conversation with the company. He was quite satisfied to exhibit himself and his shirt-front before the fire.

Next day he accompanied the Mays back to Carlingford. Mr. May had enjoyed his visit. His mind was free for the moment; he had staved off the evil day, and he had a little money in his pocket, the remains of that extra fifty pounds which he had put on to Tozer's bill. With some of it he had paid some urgent debts, and he had presented five

pounds to Cotsdean to buy his wife a gown, and he had a little money in his pockets. So that in every way he was comfortable and more at ease than usual. The reckoning was four months off, which was like an eternity to him in his present mood of mind, and of course he would get the money before that time. There was so much time, indeed, that to begin to think of the ways and means of paying it at this early period seemed absurd. He was to have three hundred pounds for the year of Copperhead's residence with him, if he stayed so long, and that would do, if nothing else. Therefore Mr. May was quite easy in his mind, not in the least feeling the possibility of trouble in store for him. And the visit had been pleasant. He had enlarged his acquaintance, and that among the very sort of people he cared to know. He had been very well received by all the Dorsets, and introduced by Sir Robert as a relation, and he had received some personal incense about his works

and his gifts which was sweet to him. Therefore he was in very good spirits, and exceedingly amiable. He conversed with his future pupil urbanely, though he had not concealed his entire concurrence in Sir Robert's opinion that he was "a cub."

"What have you been reading lately?" he asked, when they had been transferred from the Dorsets' carriage, to the admiration and by the obsequious cares of all the attendant officials, into the railway carriage. Mr. May liked the fuss and liked the idea of that superiority which attended the Dorsets' guests. He had just been explaining to his companions that Sir Robert was the Lord of the Manor, and that all the homage done to him was perfectly natural; and he was in great good-humour even with this cub.

"Well, I've not been reading very much," said Clarence, candidly. "What was the good? The governor did not want me to be a parson, or a lawyer, or anything of that sort, and a fellow wants

some sort of a motive to read. I've loafed a good deal, I'm afraid. I got into a very good set, you know, first chop—Lord Southdown, and the Beauchamps, and that lot; and—well, I suppose we were idle, and that's the truth."

"I see," said Mr. May; "a good deal of smoke and billiards, and so forth, and very little work."

"That's about it," said the young man, settling himself and his trousers, which were the objects of a great deal of affectionate care on his part. He gave them furtive pulls at the knees, and stroked them down towards the ankle, as he got himself comfortably into his seat.

Mr. May looked at him with scientific observation, and Ursula with half-affronted curiosity; his self-occupation was an offence to the girl, but it was only amusing to her father. "An unmitigated cub," Mr. May pronounced to himself; but there where he sat he represented three hundred a-year, and that, at least, was not to be

despised. Ursula was not so charitable as her father ; she was not amused by him in the slightest degree. Had he come down to Carlingford in humble worship of her pretty eyes, and with a romantic intention of making himself agreeable to her, the captivating flattery would have prepossessed Ursula, and prepared her to see him in a very pleasant light, and put the best interpretation upon all he did and said. But this pretty delusion being dissipated, Ursula was angry with herself for having been so foolish, and naturally angry with Clarence for having led her into it, though he was quite without blame in the matter. She looked at him in his corner—he had taken the best corner, without consulting her inclinations—and thought him a vulgar coxcomb, which perhaps he was. But she would not have been so indignant except for that little bit of injured feeling, for which really, after all, he was not justly to blame.

CHAPTER XII.

A PAIR OF NATURAL ENEMIES.

AFTER the evening at Grange Lane which has been described, Reginald May met Northcote in the street several times, as was unavoidable, considering the size of the place, and the concentration of all business in Carlingford within the restricted length of the High Street. The two young men bowed stiffly to each other at first; then by dint of seeing each other frequently, got to inclinations a little more friendly, until at length one day when Northcote was passing by the College, as Reginald stood in the old doorway, the young chaplain feeling magnanimous on

his own ground, and somewhat amused by the idea which suddenly presented itself to him, asked his Dissenting assailant if he would not come in and see the place. Reginald had the best of it in every way. It was he who was the superior, holding out a hand of favour and kindness to one who, here at least, was beneath him in social consideration; and it was he who was the assailed, and, so to speak, injured party, and who nevertheless extended to his assailant a polite recognition which, perhaps, no one else occupying the same position would have given. He was amused by his own magnanimity, and enjoyed it, and the pleasure of heaping coals of fire upon his adversary's head was entirely delightful to him.

“I know you do not approve of the place or me,” he said, forgetting in that moment of triumph all his own objections to it, and the ground upon which these objections were founded. “Come in and see it, will you? The chapel and the

rooms are worth seeing. They are fair memorials of the past, however little the foundation may be to your mind."

He laughed as he spoke, but without ill-humour; for it is easy to be good-humoured when one feels one's self on the gaining, not the losing side. As for Northcote, pride kept him from any demonstration of unwillingness to look at what the other had to show. He would not for worlds have betrayed himself. It was expedient for him, if he did not mean to acknowledge himself worsted, to put on a good face and accept the politeness cheerfully. So that it was on the very strength of the conflict which made them first aware of each other's existence, that they thus came together. The Dissenter declared his entire delight in being taken to see the place, and with secret satisfaction, not easily put into words, the Churchman led the way. They went to all the rooms where the old men sat, some dozing by the fire, some reading, some busy about small

businesses ; one had a turning-lathe, another was illuminating texts, a third had a collection of curiosities of a heterogeneous kind, which he was cleaning and arranging, writing neat little labels in the neatest little hand for each article.

“The charity of our ancestors might have been worse employed,” said Reginald. “A home for the old and poor is surely as fine a kind of benevolence as one could think of—if benevolence is to be tolerated at all.”

“Ye-es,” said Northcote. “I don’t pretend to disapprove of benevolence. Perhaps the young, who have a future before them, who can be of use to their country, are better objects still.”

“Because they will pay,” said Reginald; “because we can get something out of them in return; while we have already got all that is to be had out of the old people? A very modern doctrine, but not so lovely as the old-fashioned way.”

“I did not mean that,” said the other,

colouring. "Certainly it ought to pay; everything, I suppose, is meant to pay one way or other. The life and progress of the young, or the gratified sentiment of the benefactor, who feels that he has provided for the old—which is the noblest kind of payment? I think the first, for my part."

"For that matter, there is a large and most flourishing school, which you will come across without fail if you work among the poor. Do you work among the poor? Pardon my curiosity; I don't know."

"It depends upon what you call the poor," said the other, who did not like to acknowledge the absence of this element in Salem Chapel; "if you mean the destitute classes, the lowest level, no; but if you mean the respectable, comfortable—"

"Persons of small income?" said Reginald. "I mean people with no incomes at all; people without trades, or anything to earn a comfortable living by; labouring

people, here to-day and away to-morrow; women who take in washing, and men who go about hunting for a day's work. These are the kind of people the Church is weighted with."

"I don't see any trace of them," said the Nonconformist. "Smooth lawns, fine trees, rooms that countesses might live in. I can't see any trace of them here."

"There is no harm in a bit of grass and a few trees, and the rooms are cheaper in their long continuance than any flimsy new rubbish that could be built."

"I know I am making an unfortunate quotation," said Northcote; "but there is reason in it. It might be sold for so much, and given to the poor."

"Cheating the poor, in the first place," said Reginald, warmly concerned for what he felt to be his own; "just as the paddock an old horse dies in might bear a crop instead, and pay the owner; but what would become of the old horse?"

"Half—quarter of this space would do

quite as well for your pensioners, and they might do without—”

“A chaplain!” said Reginald, laughing in spite of himself. “I know you think so. It is a sinecure.”

“Well, I think they might say their prayers for themselves; a young man like you, full of talent, full of capability—I beg your pardon,” said Northcote, “you must excuse me, I grudge the waste. There are so many things more worthy of you that you might do.”

“What, for example?”

“Anything almost,” cried the other; “digging, ploughing, building—anything! And for me too.”

This he said in an undertone; but Reginald heard, and did not carry his magnanimity so far as not to reply.

“Yes,” he said; “if I am wasted reading prayers for my old men, what are you, who come to agitate for my abolition? I think, too, almost anything would be better than to encourage the ignorant to

make themselves judges of public institutions, which the wisest even find too delicate to meddle with. The digging and the ploughing might be a good thing for more than me."

"I don't say otherwise," said the young Dissenter, following into the old fifteenth century chapel, small but perfect, the young priest of the place. They stood together for a moment under the vaulted roof, both young, in the glory of their days, both with vague noble meanings in them, which they knew so poorly how to carry out. They meant everything that was fine and great these two young men, standing upon the threshold of their life, knowing little more than that they were fiercely opposed to each other, and meant to reform the world each in his own way; one by careful services and visitings of the poor, the other by the Liberation Society and overthrow of the State Church; both foolish, wrong and right, to the utmost bounds of human

possibility. How different they felt themselves standing there, and yet how much at one they were without knowing it! Northcote had sufficient knowledge to admire the perfect old building. He followed his guide with a certain humility through the details, which Reginald had already learned by heart.

“There is nothing so perfect, so beautiful, so real nowadays,” said the young Churchman, with a natural expansion of mind over the beauty to which he had fallen heir. It seemed to him, as he looked up at the tall windows with their graceful tracery, that he himself was the representative of all who had worked out their belief in God within these beautiful walls, and of all the perpetual worshippers who had knelt among the old brasses of the early founders upon the worn floor. The other stood beside him with a half envy in his mind. The Dissenter did not feel himself the heir of those centuries in the same unhesitating way. He

tried to feel that he was the heir of something better and more spiritual, yet felt a not ungenerous grudge that he could not share the other kinship too.

“It is very beautiful and noble,” he said. “I should like to feel for it as you do; but what I should like still better would be to have the same clear certainty of faith, the same conviction that what they were doing was the only right thing to do which made both building and prayer so unfaltering in those days. We can’t be so sure even of the span of an arch now.”

“No—nor can you be content with the old span, even though it is clearly the best by all rules,” said Reginald. The other smiled; he was the most speculative of the two, being perhaps the most thoughtful; and he had no fifteenth century chapel to charm, nor old foundation to give him an anchor. He smiled, but there was a little envy in his mind. Even to have one’s life set out before one within clear lines like this, would not that be something?

If it had but been possible, no doubt saying prayers for the world, even with no better than the old men of the College to say amen, had something more beautiful in it than tours of agitation for the Liberation Society; but Northcote knew that for him it was not possible, any more than was the tonsure of Reginald's predecessor, who had said mass when first those pinnacles were reared towards heaven. After he had smiled he sighed, for the old faith was more lovely than all the new agitations; he felt a little ashamed of the Liberation Society, so long as he stood under that groined and glorious roof.

"May!" said some one, coming in suddenly. "I want you to go to the hospital for me. I am obliged to go off to town on urgent business—convocation work; and I must get a lawyer's opinion about the reredos question; there is not a moment to lose. Go and see the people in the pulmonary ward, there's a good fellow; and there are two or three bad

accidents ; and that old woman who is ill in Brown's cottage, you saw her the other day ; and the Simmonds in Back Grove Street. I should have had a day's work well cut out, if I had not had this summons to town ; but the reredos question is of the first importance, you know."

"I'll go," said Reginald. There is nothing more effectual in showing us the weakness of any habitual fallacy or assumption than to hear it sympathetically, through the ears, as it were, of a sceptic. Reginald, seeing Northcote's keen eyes gleam at the sound of the Rector's voice, instinctively fell into sympathy with him, and heard the speech through him ; and though he himself felt the importance of the reredos, yet he saw in a moment how such a question would take shape in the opinion of the young Dissenter, in whom he clearly saw certain resemblances to himself. Therefore he assented very briefly, taking out his notebook to put down the special cases of which the Rector told him.

They had a confidential conversation in a corner, during which the new-comer contemplated the figure of Northcote in his strange semi-clerical garments with some amaze. "Who is your friend?" he said abruptly, for he was a rapid man, losing no time about anything.

"It is not my friend at all; it is my enemy who denounced me at the Dissenters' meeting."

"Pah!" cried the Rector, curling up his nostrils, as if some disagreeable smell had reached him. "A Dissenter here! I should not have expected it from you, May."

"Nor I either," said Reginald; but his colour rose. He was not disposed to be rebuked by any rector in Carlingford or the world.

"Are you his curate?" said Northcote, "that he orders you about as if you were bound to do his bidding. I hope, for your own sake, it is not so."

Now it was Reginald's turn to smile.

He was young, and liked a bit of grandiloquence as well as another.

“Since I have been here,” he said, “in this sinecure, as you call it—and such it almost is—I have been everybody’s curate. If the others have too much work, and I too little, my duty is clear, don’t you think?”

Northcote made no reply. Had he known what was about to be said to him, he might have stirred up his faculties to say something; but he had not an idea that Reginald would answer him like this, and it took him aback. He was too honest himself not to be worsted by such a speech. He bowed his head with genuine respect. The apology of the Churchman whom he had assaulted, filled him with a kind of reverential confusion; he could make no reply in words. And need it be said that Reginald’s heart too melted altogether when he saw how he had confounded his adversary? That silent assent more than made up for the noisy onslaught. That he should

have thus overcome Northcote made Northcote appear his friend. He was pleased and satisfied beyond the reach of words.

“ Will you come to the hospital with me?” he said; and they walked out together, the young Dissenter saying very little, doing what he could to arrange those new lights which had suddenly flashed upon his favourite subject, and feeling that he had lost his landmarks, and was confused in his path. When the logic is taken out of all that a man is doing, what is to become of him? This was what he felt; an ideal person in Reginald’s place could not have made a better answer. Suddenly somehow, by a strange law of association, there came into his mind the innocent talk he had overheard between the two girls, who were, he was aware, May’s sisters. A certain romantic curiosity about the family came into his mind. Certainly they could not be an ordinary family like others. There must be something in their constitution to account

for this sudden downfall, which he had encountered in the midst of all his theories. The Mays must be people of a different strain from others; a peculiar race, to whom great thoughts were familiar; he could not believe that there was anything common or ordinary in their blood. He went out in silence, with the holder of the sinecure which he had so denounced, but which now seemed to him to be held after a divine fashion, in a way which common men had no idea of. Very little could he say, and that of the most commonplace kind. He walked quite respectfully by the young clergyman's side along the crowded High Street, though without any intention of going to the hospital, or of actually witnessing the kind of work undertaken by his new friend. Northcote himself had no turn that way. To go and minister at a sick-bed had never been his custom; he did not understand how to do it; and though he had a kind of sense that it was the right thing to do, and that if anyone

demanded such a service of him he would be obliged to render it, he was all in the dark as to how he could get through so painful an office; whereas May went to it without fear, thinking of it only as the most natural thing in the world. Perhaps, it is possible, Northcote's ministrations, had he been fully roused, would have been, in mere consequence of the reluctance of his mind to undertake them, more real and impressive than those which Reginald went to discharge as a daily though serious duty; but in any case it was the Churchman whose mode was the more practical, the more useful. They had not gone far together, when they met the Rector hurrying to the railway; he cast a frowning, dissatisfied look at Northcote, and caught Reginald by the arm, drawing him aside.

“Don't be seen walking about with that fellow,” he said; “it will injure you in people's minds. What have you to do with a Dissenter—a demagogue? Your

father would not like it any more than I do. Get rid of him, May."

"I am sorry to displease either you or my father," said Reginald stiffly; "but, pardon me, in this respect I must judge for myself."

"Don't be pig-headed," said the spiritual ruler of Carlingford; but he had to rush off for his train, and had no time to say more. He left Reginald hot and angry, doubly disposed, as was natural, to march Northcote over all the town, and show his intimacy with him. Get rid of an acquaintance whom he chose to extend his countenance to, to please the Rector! For a man so young as Reginald May, and so lately made independent, such an act of subserviency was impossible indeed.

Before they entered the hospital however, another encounter happened of a very different character. Strolling along in the centre of the pavement, endeavouring after the almost impossible combination of a yawn and a cigar, they perceived a large figure

in a very long great-coat, and with an aspect of languor and *ennui* which was unmistakable a hundred yards off. This apparition called a sudden exclamation from Northcote.

“If it was possible,” he said, “I should imagine I knew that man. Are there two like him? but I can’t fancy what he could be doing here.”

“*That fellow!*” said Reginald. “It’s a pity if there are two like him. I can’t tell you what a nuisance he is to me. His name is Copperhead; he’s my father’s pupil.”

“Then it *is* Copperhead! I thought there could not be another. He gives a sort of odd familiar aspect to the place all at once.”

“Then you are a friend of his!” said Reginald, with a groan. “Pardon the natural feelings of a man whose father has suddenly chosen to become a coach. I hate it, and my dislike to the thing is

reflected on the person of the pupil. I suppose that's what my antipathy means."

"He does not merit antipathy. He is a bore, but there is no harm in him. Ah! he is quickening his pace; I am afraid he has seen us; and anybody he knows will be a godsend to him, I suppose."

"I am off," said Reginald; "you will come again? that is," he added, with winning politeness, "I shall come and seek you out. We are each the moral Antipodes of the other, Miss Beecham says—from which she argues that we should be acquainted and learn the meaning of our differences."

"I am much obliged to Miss Beecham"

"Why, Northcote!" said Clarence Copperhead, bearing down upon them in his big grey Ulster, like a ship in full sail. "Morning, May; who'd have thought to see you here. Oh, don't turn on my account! I'm only taking a walk; it don't matter which way I go."

"I am very much hurried. I was just

about to hasten off to an appointment. Good-bye, Northcote," said Reginald. "We shall meet again soon, I hope."

"By Jove! this is a surprise," said Clarence; "to see you here, where I should as soon have thought of looking for St. Paul's; and to find you walking about cheek by jowl with that muff, young May, who couldn't be civil, I think, if he were to try. What is the meaning of it? I suppose you're just as much startled to see me. I'm with a coach; clever, and a good scholar and good family, and all that; father to that young sprig: so there ain't any mystery about me. What's brought you here?"

"Work," said Northcote, curtly. He did not feel disposed to enter into any kind of explanation.

"Oh, work! Now I do wonder that a fellow like you, with plenty of money in your pocket, should go in for work as you do. What's the good of it? and in the Dissenting parson line of all things in the

world! When a fellow has nothing, you can understand it; he must get his grub somehow. That's what people think of you, of course. Me, I don't do anything, and everybody knows I'm a catch, and all that sort of thing. Now I don't say (for I don't know) if your governor has as much to leave behind him as mine— But halt a bit! You walk as if we were going in for athletics, and doing a two mile."

"I'm sorry to see you so easily blown," said Northcote, not displeased in his turn to say something unpleasant. "What is it? or are you only out of training?"

"That's it," said Clarence, with a gasp. "I'm awfully out of training, and that's the fact. We do, perhaps, live too well in Portland Place; but look here—about what we were saying—"

"Do you live with the Mays?"

"Worse luck! It's what you call plain cooking; and bless us all, dinner in the middle of the day, and the children at table.

But I've put a stop to that; and old May ain't a bad old fellow—don't bother me with work more than I like, and none of your high mightiness, like that fellow. I'll tell you what, Northcote, you must come and see me. I haven't got a sitting-room of my own, which is a shame, but I have the use of their rooms as much as I like. The sisters go flying away like a flock of pigeons. I'll tell you what, I'll have you asked to dinner. Capital fun it will be. A High Church parson cheek by jowl with a red-hot Dissenter, and compelled to be civil. By Jove! won't it be a joke?"

"It is not a joke that either of us will enjoy."

"Never mind, *I'll* enjoy it, by Jove!" said Copperhead. "He daren't say no. I'd give sixpence just to see you together, and the Bashaw of two tails—the young fellow. They shall have a party: leave it all to me."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW PUPIL.

MR. MAY, since the bargain was fairly concluded with the Copperheads, had thought a great deal about the three hundred a-year he was to get for his pupil. It almost doubled his income in a moment, and that has a great effect upon the imagination. It was true he would have another person to maintain on this additional income, but still that additional person would simply fill Reginald's place, and it did not at first occur to him that what was good enough for himself, Mr. May, of St. Roque's, was not good enough for any *parvenu* on the face of the earth. Therefore the additional

income represented a great deal of additional comfort, and that general expansion of expenditure, not going into any special extravagances, but representing a universal ease and enlargement which was congenial, to him, and which was one of the great charms of money in his eyes. To be sure, when he reflected on the matter, he felt that the first half-year of Clarence's payment ought to be appropriated to that bill, which for the present had brought him so much relief; but this would be so entirely to lose the benefit of the money so far as he was himself concerned, that it was only in moments of reflection that this appeared urgent. The bill to which Tozer's signature had been appended did not oppress his conscience. After all, what was it? Not a very large sum, a sum which when put to it, and with time before him, he could so easily supply; and as for any other consideration it was really, when you come to think of it, a quite justifiable expedient, not to be condemned except by squeamish persons, and which being never

known, could do no harm in the world. He had not harmed anybody by what he had done. Tozer, who was quite able to pay it over and over again, would never know of it; and in what respect, he asked himself, was it worse to have done this than to have a bill really signed by a man of straw, whose "value received" meant nothing in the world but a simple fiction? Cotsdean was no more than a man of straw; if left to himself, he could not pay anything, nor had he anything really to do with the business for which his name stood sponsor; and Tozer's name was merely placed there in the same fictitious way, without any trouble to Tozer, or burden of responsibility. What was the difference, except that it saved trouble and anxiety to everybody except the principal in the affair, he who ought to bear the brunt? Mr. May recognised this without doubt. It was he who had reaped the advantage; and whether Cotsdean, was the instrument who knew all about it, or Tozer, who did not know anything about it

it was he, Mr. May whose natural duty it was to meet the claim and pay the money. He was an honest man ; if he was occasionally a little slow in his payments, no one could throw any doubt upon his character. But, of course, should any unforeseen emergency arise, the pupil at once made that straight. Mr. May felt that he had only to go to the bank, which generally did not encourage his visits, and tell them of his pupil, to have the money at once. Nobody could reject such unmistakeable security. So that really there was no further occasion for so much as thinking of Tozer ; that was provided for ; with the freest conscience in the world he might put it out of his mind. But how he could feel this so strongly, and at the same time revel in the consciousness of a fuller purse, more to enjoy, and more to spend, is a mystery which it would be difficult to solve. He did so, and many others have done so beside him, eating their cake, yet believing that they

had their cake with the fullest confidence. He was a sensible man, rather priding himself on his knowledge of business, with much experience in human nature, and a thoughtful sense (fully evidenced in his writings) of all the strange inconsistencies and self-deceits of mankind ; but he dropped into this strain of self-delusion with the calmest satisfaction of mind, and was as sure of his own good sense and kindness as if he had never in all his life taken a step out of the rigidest of the narrow ways of uprightness.

Some part of this illusion, however, was sharply dispelled at a very early date. Clarence Copperhead, who was not likely to err by means of too much consideration for the feelings of others, grumbled frankly at the mid-day meal.

“ I don’t understand a two o’clock dinner,” he said ; “ it’s lunch, that’s what I call it ; and I won’t be disagreeable about the kids, but I must have my dinner. Bless you ! a man can’t live with-

out his dinner. What is he to do? It is the sort of thing you can look forward to, whatever happens. If it's a wet day, or anything of that sort, there's always dinner; and after it's over, if there's music or a rubber, why, that's all very well; or if a man feels a bit sleepy, it doesn't matter. Why, dinner's your standby, wherever you are. I'd as soon do without my head, for my part."

Ursula hastened to tell her father this, with dismay in her looks.

"I've always heard that late dinners were so expensive; you require twice as many dishes. At two, one has only what is necessary; but at seven, you require to have fish, and soup, and *entrées*, and all sorts of things, besides the joint. It was disgraceful of him to say it!" cried Ursula; "and I think he ought to be made to follow our plan, whatever it is, and not do everything he likes here."

"That is all very true," said Mr. May; "but he is right about the dinner; it is a great deal more agreeable."

“And expensive, papa.”

“Well, perhaps it is a great deal to expect at your age; but if you read your cookery-book, as I have often said, when you were reading those novels, and learned how to toss up little dishes out of nothing, and make *entrées*, and so forth, at next to no expense—”

The tears came into Ursula's eyes at this unjust assault.

“Papa,” she said, “you ought to know better at your age. One forgives the boys for saying such silly things. How can I toss up little dishes out of nothing? If you only knew the price of butter, not to talk of anything else. Made dishes are the most expensive things! A leg of mutton, for instance; there it is, and when one weighs it, one knows what it costs; but there is not one of those *entrées* but costs *shillings* for herbs and truffles and gravy and forcemeat, and a glass of white wine here, and a half pint of claret there. It is all very well to talk of dishes made

out of nothing. The meat may not be very much—hand men never think of the other things, I suppose.”

“It is management that is wanted,” said Mr. May, “to throw nothing away, to make use of everything, to employ all your scraps. If you once have a good sauce—which is as easy as daylight when you take the trouble—you can make all sorts of things out of a cold joint; but women never will take the trouble, and that is the secret of poor dinners. Not one in fifty will do it. If you wanted really to help us, and improve my position, you might, Ursula. I can’t afford to fall out with Copperhead, he is very important to me just at this moment; and perhaps it is better that I should give in to him at once about the late dinner.”

“You may say it is not my business,” said Ursula, “but we have already another maid, and now two dinners—for it is just the same as two dinners. He will not be any advantage to you like that, and why

should he be so much harder to please than we are? Reginald never grumbled, who was much better bred and better educated than Mr. Copperhead."

"And with so much money to keep up his dignity," said her father mockingly. "No, it is not your business, the cookery book is your business, and how to make the best of everything; otherwise I don't want any advice from you."

"What did he say?" cried Janey, rushing in as soon as her father had left the room. Ursula, a very general consequence of such interviews, was sitting by the fire, very red and excited, with tears glistening in her eyes.

"Of course I knew what he would say; he says it is not my business, and there are to be late dinners, and everything that man chooses to ask for. Oh, it is so hard to put up with it!" cried Ursula, her eyes flashing through her tears. "I am to read up the cookery book and learn to make *entrées* for them; but to say we

can't afford it is not my business. I wonder whose business it is? It is I who have to go to the tradespeople and to bear it all if they grumble; and now this horrible man, who dares to tell me the coffee is not strong enough, as if I was a barmaid—"

"Barmaids don't have to do with coffee, have they?" said matter of fact Janey, "but the fact is *he is not a gentleman*; why should you mind? What does it matter what a person like that says or does? You said so yourself, he is not a bit a gentleman. I wonder what Cousin Anne and Cousin Sophy could mean."

"It is not their fault; they think of his mother, who is nice, who sent those things; but Mr. Copperhead knew about the things, which was not so nice of her, was it? But never mind, we must try to make the best of it. Get the cookery book, Janey; perhaps if you were to read it out loud, and we were both to try to fix our mind upon it—for something must be

done," said Ursula gravely. "Papa will never find it out till all the money is spent, but we shall be poorer than we were before we had the pupil. Who is that, Janey, at the door?"

It was Phœbe, who came in blooming from the cold, in a furred jacket, at which the girls looked with unfeigned admiration. "The skating will soon come on in earnest now," she said, "grandmamma is better, and I thought I might come and see you:—I had a long talk with your brother the other day, did he tell you? and I made him know Mr. Northcote, one of our people. I know you will turn up your pretty nose, Ursula, at a Dissenter."

"I should think so," cried Janey, "we have nothing to do with such people, being gentlefolks, have we Ursula? Oh, I forgot! I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to say—"

Phœbe smiled upon her serenely. "I am not angry," she said, "I understand

all that; and in Carlingford I have no right, I suppose, to stand upon being a lady, though I always thought I was one. I am only a young woman here, and not so bad either for that, if you will promise, Janey, not to call me a young person—”

“Oh, Miss Beecham!”

“Mr. Copperhead is a Dissenter,” said Ursula, somewhat sullenly, “we put up with him because he is rich. Oh, it is all very disagreeable! I don’t want to know any new people whatever they are; I find the old ones bad enough. Reginald hates him too, a big lazy useless being that treats one as if one were a chambermaid!”

“Is it Clarence? It is not quite his fault. His mother is a lady, but his father is a brute,” said Phoebe, “thinking of nothing but his horrible money. Clarence is not so bad. It is because he has no imagination, and does not understand other people’s feelings; he does not mean it, poor fellow; he goes trampling about with his big feet upon everybody’s toes,

and never is a bit the wiser. Here he is—he is coming in with your father. I suppose there must be a great deal in race,” she added with a soft little sigh, “Clarence looks a clown, and your father such a gentleman. I suppose I show just the same when I stand beside you.”

Now Phœbe was well aware that this was not the case, and Ursula’s indignant disclaimer made her rather laugh, because it was so unnecessary, than be pleased by its vehemence. There was an old convex mirror opposite which reflected the girls in miniature, making a pretty picture of them as they sat together, Ursula with her dark locks, and Phœbe in her golden hair, and the tall sharp school-girl, Janey, all elbows and angles, short petticoats and grey stockings. Janey was the only one in whom there could have been suspected any inferiority of race; but her awkwardness was that of youth, and her disordered hair and dress belonged also to her age, for she was at that trouble-

some period when frocks are constantly getting too short, and sleeves too scanty. Janey was shuffling slowly round the visitor, admiring her at every point; her garments were not made as dresses were made in Carlingford. Their fit and their texture were alike too perfect for anything that ever came out of High Street. The furred jacket had not been seen in Grange Lane before. Perhaps it was because the cold had become more severe, an ordinary and simple reason—or because Clarence Copperhead, who knew her, and in whose eyes it was important to bate no jot of her social pretensions, was here; and the furred jacket was beyond comparison with anything that had been seen for ages in Carlingford. The deep border of fur round the velvet, the warm waddings and paddings, the close fit up to the throat, were excellencies which warranted Janey's tour of inspection. Phœbe perceived it very well, but did not confuse the girl by taking any notice, and in her heart

she was herself slightly pre-occupied, wondering (as Ursula had done) what the man had come here for, and what he would say when he saw her. Both of these young women had a secret belief that something romantic, something more than the mere prose of reading in the first tutor's house that happened to have been suggested to him, had brought young Copperhead to such an unlikely place as Carlingford. Ursula had by this time learned to reject this hypothesis with much indignation at herself for having entertained it, but Phœbe still felt slightly fluttered by this possibility, and was eager for the entrance of Clarence. She would know at once what had brought him, she said to herself, the moment she caught his eye.

And though Mr. May had reconciled himself so completely to the Tozer business, the appearance of Tozer's granddaughter gave him a momentary shock. What did you do with my grandfather's

letter? he thought her eyes said, and the meeting confused and disturbed him. This, however, was only for a moment. He was a man to whom it was always possible to make himself agreeable to women, and though he felt so easy in his mind about Tozer, still it was evident that to conciliate Tozer's relation, and that so influential a relation, was on the whole a good thing to do. He was going up to her accordingly with outstretched hands, and the most amiable inquiries about her grandmother's health, when, to his surprise, he was frustrated by Clarence who had come in before him—his large person swelling out, as it always seemed to do when he presented himself upon a new scene, with importance and grandeur.

“Miss Beecham!” he said, “really, who would have thought it? Now look here, I came to Carlingford thinking there was not a soul I knew in the place; and here have you turned up all at once, and

Northcote (you know Northcote?). It is very queer."

"It is odd, isn't it?" said Phœbe quickly. "I was astonished to 'see Mr. Northcote, and though I heard you were coming I am not less surprised to see you." "He has not come for me," she said rapidly to herself, "nor for Ursula either; then who is it?" Phœbe demanded in the depths of her own bosom; that he should have come for nobody at all but simply for his own purposes, to get a little information put into his head, seemed incredible to both the girls. Ursula, for her part, had been angry when she discovered his want of meaning, though why she would have found it hard to say. But Phœbe, for her part, was not angry. She took this like other things of the kind, with great and most philosophical calm, but she could not outgrow it all at once. For whom was it? His cousins, those Miss Dorsets? But they were much older, and not the kind of women for whom such an

act was likely. Her mind wandered forth lively and curious in search of the necessary clue. She could not consent to the fact that no clue was necessary where no mystery was.

“I am glad to see that you venture out in this wintry weather,” said Mr. May; “you set us all a good example. I am always telling my girls that cold weather is no sufficient reason for staying indoors. I wish Ursula would do as you do.”

“Papa, how can you talk so?” said Janey, indignant; “when you know very well it is not the cold that keeps Ursula in, but because she has so much to do.”

“Oh, yes, one knows the sort of things young ladies have to do,” said Clarence, with a laugh; “read stories, and look up pretty dresses for their parties, eh, Miss Janey? and consult the fashion books. Oh, of course you will deny it; but my mother makes me her confidant, and I know that’s what you all do.”

“To be sure,” said Phœbe, “we are

not so clever as you are, and can't do so many things. We know no Latin or Greek to keep our minds instructed; we acknowledge our infirmity; and we couldn't play football to save our lives. Football is what you do in this season, when you don't hunt, and before the ice is bearing? We are poor creatures; we can't parcel out our lives, according as it is time for football or cricket. You must not be so severe upon girls for being so inferior to you."

("Oh, don't be too hard upon him,") whispered Ursula, in a parenthesis, afraid that this irony should drive the pupil to desperation. ("Hard upon him! he will never find it out,") Phœbe whispered back in the same tone.

"Oh, hang it all, I don't mean to be severe upon girls," said Clarence, pulling his moustache with much complacency; "I am sorry for them, I can tell you. It ain't their fault; I know heaps of nice

girls who feel it horribly. What can they do? they can't go in for cricket and football. There ought to be something invented for them. To be sure there is lawn tennis, but that's only for summer. I should go mad, I think, if I had nothing to do."

"But you have more brain and more strength, you see, than we have; and besides we are used to it," said Phœbe. "I am afraid, Ursula, grandmamma will want me, and I must go."

Here Mr. May said something to his daughter, which filled Ursula with excitement, mingled of pleasure and displeasure.

"Papa says, will you come to dinner to-morrow at seven? It appears there is some one you know coming—a Mr. Northcote. I don't know who he is, but it will be very kind if you will come on my account," the girl concluded, whispering in her ear, "for how shall I ever get through a dinner party? We never gave one in my life before."

“Of course I will come,” said Phœbe. “Dinner parties are not so common here, that I should neglect the chance. I must thank Mr. May. But I hope you know who Mr. Northcote is,” she added, laughing. “I gave an account of myself loyally, before I permitted you to ask me; but Mr. Northcote—Oh, no! he does not belong to——the lower classes; but he is a fiery red-hot——”

“What?” cried eager Janey, pressing to the front. “Radical? I am a radical, too; and Reginald used to be once, and so was Ursula. Oh, I wish it was to-night!” said Janey, clasping her hands.

“Not a radical, but a Dissenter; and you who are a clergyman, Mr. May! I like you, oh, so much for it. But I wonder what the people will say.”

“My dear Miss Beecham,” said the suave Churchman, quite ready to seize the chance of making a point for himself, “in the Church, fortunately, what the people say has not to be studied, as your unfor-

tunate pastors, I am informed, have to do. While Mr. Copperhead is under my roof, I make his friends welcome—for his sake first, probably afterwards for their own.”

“Yes, I asked Northcote,” said Clarence; “I never thought they would have any objection. He’s not a common Dissenter, like the most of those fellows that have nothing but their salaries. He’s well off; he don’t require, bless you, to keep people in good temper, and toady to ’em, like most do. He’s as independent as I am; I don’t say that he’s quite as well off; but money always finds its level. I shouldn’t have thought of asking May to receive a common Dissenting fellow, like the rest.”

Phoebe laughed. It did not occur to the accomplished scion of the house of Copperhead, nor to the two girls, who were not experienced enough to think of such things, what was the meaning expressed in Phoebe’s laugh, which was not cheerful.

Mr. May himself had the advantage of more discrimination.

“I hope you will find that, Dissenter or not, I know what is my duty to my friends,” he said. “What my guests may possess, or the exact nature of their opinions on all points, are not subjects to be discussed by me.”

“Oh, there is nothing to find fault with in *you*,” said Phœbe, with less than her usual universal courtesy; “you are always kind, Mr. May:” and then she laughed again. “Some people are very clever in finding out the vulnerable places,” she said.

“She is changed,” said Clarence, when she was gone. “She is not the jolly girl she used to be. She was always a very jolly girl; ready to help a fellow out of a scrape, you know. But Northcote’s a fearfully clever fellow. You should just hear him talk. He and May will go at it hammer and tongs, as sure as fate.”

CHAPTER XIV.

URSULA'S ENTRÉES.

IT would be difficult to describe the anxiety with which that first "late dinner" was regarded by Ursula. Janey, too, had thrown herself into it heart and soul, until she received the crushing intimation from her father, that her company was not expected at this stately meal; a discovery which altogether extinguished poor Janey, accustomed to be always in the front whatever occurred, and to whom suggestions of things that could not be done by a girl who was not "out," had never presented themselves. She retired to her own room dissolved in tears when

this fearful mandate went forth, and for the rest of the morning was good for nothing, her eyes being converted into a sort of red pulp, her rough hair doubly dishevelled, her whole being run into tears. She was of no more use now to go errands between the kitchen and the drawing-room, or to read the cookery-book out loud, which was a process upon which Ursula depended very much, to fix in her mind the exact ingredients and painful method of preparation of the entrées at which she was toiling. Betsy, the former maid of all-work, now promoted under the title of cook, could be trusted to roast the saddle of mutton, which, on consideration that it was "a party," had been thought preferable to a leg, and she could boil the fish, after a sort, and make good honest family soup, and the rice-pudding or apple-tart, which was the nearest approach to luxury indulged in at the parsonage; but as for entrées, Betsy did not know what they were. She had heard of made dishes

indeed, and respectfully afar off had seen them when she was kitchen-maid at Lady Weston's—the golden age of her youthful inexperience. But this was so long ago, that her recollections were rather confusing than useful to Ursula, when she went downstairs to make her first heroic effort.

“La, Miss, that ain't how cook used to do 'em at Lady Weston's,” Betsy said, looking on with unbelieving eyes. She was sure of this negative, but she was not sure of anything else, and utterly failed to give any active assistance, after driving the girl desperate with her criticisms. Altogether it was a confused and unpleasant day. When Reginald came in in the morning, his sister had no time to speak to him, so anxious was she and pre-occupied, and the drawing-room was being turned upside down, to make it look more modern, more elegant, more like the Dorsets' drawing-room, which was the only one Ursula knew. The comfortable round table in the middle, round which the

family had grouped themselves for so long, had been pushed aside into a corner, leaving one fresh patch of carpet, quite inappropriate, and unconnected with anything else; and instead of the work and the school-books which so often intruded there, all that was gaudy and uninteresting in the May library had been produced to decorate the table; and even a case of wax flowers, a production of thirty years since, which had been respectfully transferred to a china closet by Ursula's better taste, but which in the dearth of ornament she had brought back again. Reginald carried off the wax flowers and replaced the table with his own hands, while Ursula scorched her cheeks over the entrées downstairs.

“All this for Northcote,” he said, when she ran up for a moment, done up in a big white apron, her face crimson with the fire and anxiety combined: “for Miss Beecham has been here before, and you made no fuss about her then.”

“She came to tea,” said Ursula. “And I got a cake, which was all anyone could do ; but a dinner is a very different thing.” Indeed she had by this time come to share her father’s opinion, that dinner was the right and dignified thing in all cases, and that they had been hitherto living in a very higgledy-piggledy way. The dinner had gone to her head.

“Then it is for Northcote, as I say,” said Reginald. “Do you know who he is ?”

“A Dissenter,” said Ursula, with a certain languor ; “but so, you know, is Mr. Copperhead, and he is the chief person here nowadays. Papa thinks there is nobody like him. And so is Phœbe.”

“Oh, have you come so far as that ?” said Reginald, with a little tinge of colour in his face. He laughed, but the name moved him. “It is a pretty fresh sort of country name, not quite like such an accomplished person.”

“Oh, that is just like you men, with

your injustice ! Because she is clever you take it amiss ; you are all jealous of her. Look at her pretty colour and her beautiful hair ; if that is not fresh I should like to know what is. She might be Hebe instead of Phœbe," said Ursula, who had picked up scraps of classical knowledge in spite of herself.

" You are a little goose," said Reginald, pinching her ear ; but he liked his sister for her generous partizanship. " Mind you don't come to dinner with cheeks like that," he said. " I like my sister to be herself, not a cookmaid, and I don't believe in entrées;" but he went away smiling, and with a certain warmth in his breast. He had gone up and down Grange Lane many times at the hour of sunset, hoping to meet Phœbe again, but that sensible young woman had no mind to be talked of, and never appeared except when she was certain the road was clear. This had tantalized Reginald more than he chose to avow, even to himself. Pride prevented

him from knocking at the closed door. The old Tozers were fearful people to encounter, people whom to visit would be to damn himself in Carlingford; but then the Miss Griffiths were very insipid by the side of Phoebe, and the variety of her talk, though he had seen so little of her, seemed to have created a new want in his life. He thought of a hundred things which he should like to discuss with her—things which did not interest Ursula, and which the people about him did not understand much. Society at that time, as may be presumed, was in a poor way in Carlingford. The Wentworths and Wodehouses were gone, and many other nice people; the houses in Grange Lane were getting deserted, or falling into inferior hands, as was apparent by the fact that the Tozers—old Tozer, the buttermaker—had got one of them. The other people were mostly relics of a bygone state of things: retired old couples, old ladies, spinsters, and widows—excellent people, but not lively

to talk to—and the Griffiths, above mentioned, put up with in consideration of tolerable good looks and “fun,” became tiresome when anything better was to be had. The mere apparition of Phœbe upon the horizon had been enough to show Reginald that there were other kinds of human beings in the world. It had not occurred to him that he was in love with her, and the idea of the social suicide implied in marrying old Tozer’s granddaughter, had not so much as once entered his imagination. Had he thought of it, he would have pulled that imagination up tight, like an unruly horse, the thing being too impossible to bear thinking of. But this had never entered his mind. He wanted to see Phœbe, to talk to her, to be near her, as something very new, captivating, and full of interest—that was all. No one else within his sphere could talk so well. The Rector was very great indeed on the reredos question, and the necessity of reviving the disused “Church”

customs ; but Reginald could not go so far as he did as to the importance of the reredos, and was quite in doubt whether it was not as well for most people to "direct" themselves by their own consciences, as to be directed by the spiritual head of the parish, who was not over-wise in his own concerns. His father, Reginald knew, could be very agreeable among strangers, but he seldom chose to be so in his own house. All this made the advent of Phœbe appear to him like a sudden revelation out of a different world. He was an Oxford man, with the best of education, but he was a simpleton all the same. He thought he saw in her an evidence of what life was like in those intellectual professional circles, which a man may hope to get into only in London. It was not the world of fashion he was aware, but he thought in his simplicity that it was the still higher world of culture and knowledge, where genius, and wit, and intellect stood instead of rank or riches.

How Tozer's grand-daughter had got admission there, he did not ask himself, but this was what he thought, and to talk to her was a new sensation. He was quite unconscious of anything more.

Nobody knew when Ursula took her place at the head of the table in her pretty white dress; which she had worn at the Dorsets', how much toil and anxiety the preparations had given her. At the last moment, when her mind was so far clear of the entrées, &c.—as clear as the mind of an inexperienced dinner giver can be, until the blessed moment when they are eaten and done with—she had to take Sarah in hand, who was not very clear about the waiting, and to instruct her according to her own very imperfect knowledge how to fulfil her duties.

“Think it is not a dinner party at all, but only just our ordinary luncheon, and don't get fluttered; and when I look at you like *this* come quite close, and I will whisper what you are to do. And oh,

Sarah, like a good creature, don't break anything !” said Ursula almost with tears.

These were all the directions she could give, and they, it must be allowed, were somewhat vague. The excitement was becoming to her. She sat down with a dreadful flutter in her heart, but with her eyes shining and sparkling. Clarence Copperhead, who extended an arm very carelessly to take her downstairs, absolutely certain of being a more important person than his guest Northcote, was roused for the first time to the consciousness that she was very pretty, which he had not found out before. “But no style,” he said to himself. Phoebe was the one who had style. She sat between Mr. May and the stranger, but devoted herself to her host chiefly, displaying a gentle contempt of the younger men in his presence. No anxiety was in her mind about the dinner. She did not follow the fate of those entrées round the table with terrible palpitations

as poor Ursula did; and, alas, the entrées were not good, and Ursula had the mortification to see the dishes she had taken so much trouble with, rejected by one and another. Reginald ate some, for which she blessed him, and so did Phœbe, but Mr. May sent his plate away with polite execrations.

“Tell your cook she shall go if she sends up such uneatable stuff again, Ursula,” her father cried from the other end of the table.

Two big tears dashed up hot and scalding into Ursula’s eyes. Oh, how she wished she could be dismissed like Betsy! She turned those two little oceans of trouble piteously, without knowing it, upon Northcote, who had said something to her, without being able to reply to him. And Northcote, who was but a young man, though he was a fiery political Dissenter, and who had come to the parsonage with a curious mixture of pleasure and reluctance, immediately threw down any arms

that nature might have provided him with, and fell in love with her there and then on the spot ! to his own absolute consternation. This was how it happened. The moment was not romantic, the situation was not sublime. A little motherless housekeeper crying because her father scolded her in public for a piece of bad cookery. There is nothing in this to make an idyll out of ; but such as it was, it proved enough for Horace Northcote ; he yielded himself on the spot. Not a word was said, for Ursula felt that if she tried to talk she must cry, and anything further from her troubled thoughts than love it would be impossible to imagine ; but then and there, so far as the young man was concerned, the story began. He talked very little for the rest of the meal, and Ursula did not exert herself, though she recovered slightly when the mutton turned out to be very good, and was commended ; but what was the mutton in comparison with her entrées, which she had

made with her own hands, and which were a failure? She was reduced to silence, and she thought that the stranger at her left hand was nice, because he did not bother her, and was content with a very little talk.

“Oh, Phœbe, did you hear papa about those entrées?” she cried, when they reached the drawing-room; and sitting down on the stool by the fire which Janey usually appropriated, she cried, poor child, with undisguised passion. “I had made them myself; I had been busy about them all day; I read the cookery book till my head ached, and took such pains! and you heard what he said.”

“Yes, dear, I heard him; but he did not think what he was saying, it never occurred to him that it was you. Don’t shake your little head, I am sure of it; you know, Ursula, your papa is very agreeable and very clever.”

“Yes, I know he is clever; and he can be nice when he likes—”

“Did you like it?” cried Janey, bursting in, red-eyed and dishevelled in her morning frock. “Oh, no, I am not dressed, I don’t mean to, to let him get the better of me, and think I care. Only just for a moment to see you two. Oh, isn’t Phoebe grand in that dress? She is like a picture; you are nothing beside her, Ursula. Tell me, is it nice to have dinner instead of tea? Did it go off very well, did you enjoy yourselves? Or were you all unhappy, sitting round the table, eating beef and mutton,” cried Janey with all the scorn of ignorance, “at that ridiculous hour!”

“I was as miserable as I could be,” cried Ursula, “I was not happy at all. Enjoy myself! with the entrées on my mind, and after what papa said. Oh, run away, Janey, and dress, or else go to bed. Papa will be so angry if he comes up and finds you here.”

“I should like to make him frantic,” cried Janey with vindictive force, “I should just like to drive him out of his

senses! Never mind, yes, I am angry, haven't I a right to be angry? I am as tall as Ursula—I hope I know how to behave myself—and when there were people coming, and a real dinner—”

“Oh, I hear them,” cried Ursula in alarm, and Janey flew off, her hair streaming behind her. Phœbe put her arm round Ursula, and raised her from the stool. She was not perhaps a perfect young woman, but had her own ends to serve like other people; yet she had a friendly soul. She gave her friend a kiss to preface her admonition, as girls have a way of doing.

“I would not let Janey talk so,” she said, “I think you should not talk so yourself, Ursula, if you will forgive me, of your papa; he is very nice, and so clever. I should try all I could to please him, and I should not let anyone be disrespectful to him if it was I.”

“Oh, Phœbe, if you only knew—”

“Yes I know, gentlemen don't understand often; but we must do our duty.

He is nice, and clever, and handsome, and you ought to be proud of him. Dry your eyes, here they are really, coming upstairs. You must be good-humoured and talk. He is ever so much nicer than the young men," said Phœbe, almost loud enough to be heard, as Clarence Copperhead, sauntering in advance of the others with his large shirt front fully displayed, came into the room. He came in half whistling in serene indifference. Phœbe had "style," it was true; but she was only a Dissenting parson's daughter, and what were two such girls to Clarence Copperhead? He came in whistling an opera air, which he let drop only after he was well inside the door.

"Miss Beecham, let us have some music. I know you can play," he said.

"If Miss May likes," said Phœbe, covering his rudeness; and then she laughed, and added, "if you will accompany me."

"Does Mr. Copperhead play too?"

"Oh, beautifully. Has he not let you see his music? Won't you bring it here, and let us look over it? I daresay there

are some things we can play together."

"You can play everything," said the young man. "And I'll bring my violin, if you like."

He was delighted; he quickened his steps almost into a run as he went away.

"You should not laugh at Mr. Copperhead," Ursula retorted on her friend. "You should be good-humoured, too. You are better than I am, but you are not quite good, after all."

"Violin!" said Mr. May. "Heaven and earth! is there going to be any fiddling? Miss Beecham, I did not expect you to bring such a horror upon me. I thought I had nothing but good to expect from you."

"Wait till you hear him, Sir," said Phœbe.

Mr. May retired to the far corner of the room. He called young Northcote to him, who was standing beside Ursula, eager to talk, but not knowing how to begin. It was bad enough to be thus withdrawn

from his chance of making himself agreeable; but the reader may imagine what was the young Dissenter's feelings when Mr. May, with a smile, turned upon him. Having given him a (tolerably) good dinner, and lulled him into a belief that his sins against the family were unknown, he looked at him, smiling, and began.

“Mr. Northcote, the first time I saw you, you were discoursing at an Anti-Establishment Meeting in the Town Hall.”

Northcote started. He blushed fiery red. “It is quite true. I wished to have told you; not to come here on false pretences; but Copperhead—and your son has been very kind—”

“Then I suppose your views are modified. Clergymen no longer appear to you the demons in human shape you thought them then; and my son, in particular, has lost his horns and hoofs?”

“Mr. May, you are very severe; but I own there is reason—”

“It was you who were severe. I was

not quite sure of you till Copperhead brought you in. Nay," said the clergyman, rubbing his hands ; "do you think that I object to the utterance of a real opinion ? Certainly not. As for Reginald, it was the thing that decided him ; I leave you to find out how ; so that we are positively in your debt. But I hope you don't fiddle, too. If you like to come with me to my study—"

Northcote gave a longing look round the room, which had become all at once so interesting to him. Mr. May was too clear-sighted not to see it. He thought, quite impartially, that perhaps it was an excusable weakness, even though it was his own society that was the counter attraction. They were two nice-looking girls. This was how he put it, being no longer young, and father to one of them ; naturally, the two young men would have described the attraction of Phoebe and Ursula more warmly. Clarence Copperhead, who had just come in with an armful of music and his fiddle, was not thinking of the girls, nor of anything but the sweet sounds he was about to make—

and himself. When he began to tune his violin, Mr. May got up in dismay.

“This is more than mortal can stand,” he said, making as though he would have gone away. Then he changed his mind, for, after all, he was the chaperon of his motherless girl. “Get me the paper, Ursula,” he said. It would be hard to tell with what feelings Northcote contemplated him. He was the father of Ursula, yet he dared to order her about, to bring the tears to her eyes. Northcote darted the same way as she was going, and caught at the paper on a side-table, and brought it hastily. But alas, that was last week’s paper! he did not save her the trouble, but he brought upon himself a gleam of mischief from her father’s eyes. “Mr. Northcote thinks me a tyrant to send you for the paper,” he said, as he took it out of her hands. “Thank him for his consideration. But he was not always so careful of your peace of mind,” he added, with a laugh.

Ursula looked at him with a wondering question in her eyes ; but those tears were no longer there which had gone to Northcote's heart.

"I don't know what papa means," she said, softly ; and then, "I want to beg your pardon, please. I was very silly. Will you try to forget it, and not tell any one, Mr. Northcote ? The truth was, I thought I had done them nicely, and I was vexed. It was very childish," she said, shaking her head, with something of the same moisture floating back over the lustre in her pretty eyes.

"I will never tell anyone, you may be sure," said the young man ; but Ursula did not notice that he declined to give the other pledge, for Reginald came up just then with wrath in his eyes.

"Is that idiot going to fiddle all night ?" he cried (poor Clarence had scarcely begun) ; "as if anybody wanted to hear him and his tweedle-dees. Miss Beecham plays like St. Cecilia, Ursula ; and I want

to speak to her about something. Can't you get that brute beguiled away?"

Clarence was the one who was *de trop* in the little party; but he fiddled beatifically, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, without the slightest suspicion of the fact, while Phœbe accompanied him, with little smiles at her friends, and shrugs of her shoulders. Reginald felt very strongly, though for the first time, that she was overdoing the Scriptural maxim of being all things to all men.

CHAPTER XV.

SOCIETY AT THE PARSONAGE.

AFTER this dinner-party, such as it was, the Parsonage became gradually the centre of a little society, such as sometimes forms in the most accidental way in a house where there are young men and young women, and of which no one can say what momentous results may arise. They came together fortuitously, blown to one centre by the merest winds of circumstance, out of circles totally different and unlike. Why it was that Mr. May, so good a Churchman, permitted two people so entirely out of his sphere to become his habitual guests and the companions of his children was very perplexing to the outside

world, who half in mere surprise, and a little in despite, wondered and commented till they were tired, or till they had become so familiar with the strange spectacle that it ceased to strike them. A rich pupil might be forgiven for being a Dissenter, indeed in Carlingford as elsewhere money made up for most deficiencies; but even natural complacency towards the rich pupil scarcely accounted for the reception of the others. The neighbours could never be quite sure whether the family at the Parsonage knew or did not know that their new friend Northcote was not only acting as Minister of Salem Chapel, but was the assailant of Reginald May at the Anti-Establishment Meeting, and various persons in Grange Lane held themselves for a long time on tiptoe of preparation, ready to breathe to Mr. May the painful intelligence, in case he was unaware of it. But he never gave them the opportunity. Honestly, he had forgotten the speaker's name at first, and only recognised him when he was introduced by young Copperhead;

and then the situation was piquant and amused him, especially the evident confusion and consternation of the culprit when found out.

“I don’t know what he thinks he has done to you,” said Clarence, “I could scarcely make him come in. He says he is sure you can’t wish to see him.”

This was two days after the dinner, when Horace Northcote came to leave a respectful card, hoping that he might see Ursula at a door or window. Clarence had seized upon him and dragged him in, in spite of himself.

“On the contrary, I am very glad to see him,” said Mr. May, with a smile. He looked at the young Dissenter with a jeer in his eyes. He liked to punish him, having suddenly perceived that this jeer was much more potent than any serious penalty. “If he will promise not to slay me, I shan’t quarrel with him.” Mr. May was in such good spirits at this moment that he could afford to joke; his own magnanimity, and the other’s confused

looks of guilt, overcame his gravity. "Come back again," he said, holding out his hand; and though Horace retired for the moment utterly confounded, yet the attractions of the cheerful house overcame, after a while, his sense of humiliation and inappropriateness. If the injured family had condoned his offence, why should he mind? and the pleasant girlish friendliness, without any *arrière pensée*, of Ursula, was enough to have set any man at his ease; the facts of the case being that Mrs. Hurst was away upon a long visit, and that, having no other notable gossip within the range of her acquaintance, Ursula did not know. Reginald, who did, had the same sense of magnanimity as his father had, and began to like the society of the congenial yet different spirit which it was so strange to him to find under a guise so unlike his own. And Northcote, on his side, finding no house to which he could betake himself among those whom Phœbe called "our own people," found a refuge, which gradually became dearer and dearer

to him, at the Parsonage, and in his profound sense of the generosity of the people who had thus received him, felt his own partizanship wax feebler and feebler every day. He seemed to see the ground cut from under his feet, as he watched the young chaplain at his work. Mr. May, to be sure, was no example of pastoral diligence, but he was a pleasant companion, and had put himself from the first in that position of moral superiority which naturally belongs to an injured person who can forgive heartily and without prejudice. And Ursula! He did not venture to call her Ursula, even in the secret depths of his heart. There a pronoun was enough, as, indeed, incipient Love generally finds it. She spoke to him, smiled at him in the street; and immediately life became a *Vita Nuova* to him. The young Dissenter was as Dante, and simple Ursula, with her housekeeping books in her hand, became another Beatrice. It is not everyone who has the capacity for this perfect and absorbing sentiment; but Horace Northcote had, and

for a long time Ursula was as unconscious of it as heart could desire.

Phœbe's admission to the house had been more simple still. A girlish fancy on Ursula's part, a fit of good-nature on her father's, and then that secret thread of connection with Tozer which no one knew of, and the coming of Clarence Copperhead, to please whom Mr. May permitted himself to be persuaded to do much; and in addition to all this, her good look, her pretty manners, her cleverness and the deference she had always shown in the proper quarter. Mr. May did not enter into the lists with his son, or think of offering himself as a suitor to Phœbe; but he liked to talk to her, and to watch what he called "her little ways," and to hear her play when Clarence and his violin were otherwise disposed of. He was an experienced man, priding himself on a knowledge of human nature, and Phœbe's "little ways" amused him greatly. What did she mean? to "catch" Clarence Cop-

perhead who would be a great match, or to fascinate Northcote? Oddly enough Mr. May never thought of Reginald, though that young man showed an eagerness to talk to Phœbe which was more than equal with his own, and had always subjects laid up ready to discuss with her, when he could find the opportunity. Sometimes he would go up to her in the midst of the little party and broach one of these topics straight on end, without preface or introduction, as which was her favourite play of Shakespeare, and what did she think of the character of King Lear? It was not very wise, not any wiser than his neighbour was, who made pretty little Ursula into the ideal lady, the most gentle and stately figure in poetry; and yet no doubt there was something in both follies that was a great deal better than wisdom. The society formed by these two young pairs, with Clarence Copperhead as a heavy floating balance, and Mr. May and Janey, one philosophical, wise

and mistaken—the other sharp-sighted and seeing everything—as spectators, was very pleasant to the close little coterie themselves, and nobody else got within the charmed circle. They grew more and more intimate daily, and had a whole vocabulary of domestic jokes and allusions which no one else could understand. It must be allowed, however, that the outside world was not pleased with this arrangement on either side of the question. The Church people were shocked with the Mays for harbouring Dissenters under any circumstances whatever, and there had not been a Minister at Salem Chapel for a long time so unpopular as Horace Northcote, who was always “engaged” when any of the connection asked him to tea, and preached sermons which went over their heads, and did not remember them when he met them in the street. Tozer was about the only one of the congregation who stood up for the young man. The others thanked heaven that “he was but tempory,” and on

the whole they were right, for certainly he was out of place in his present post.

As for Clarence Copperhead, he led an agreeable life enough among all these undercurrents of feeling which he did not recognise with any distinctness. He was comfortable enough, pleased with his own importance, and too obtuse to perceive that he bored his companions ; and then he considered himself to be slightly “ sweet upon ” both the girls. Ursula was his favourite in the morning, when he embarrassed her much by persistently seeking her company whenever liberated by her father ; but Phœbe was the queen of the evening, when he would get his fiddle with an unfailing complacency which drove Reginald frantic. Whether it was mere good-nature or any warmer impulse, Phœbe was strangely tolerant of these fiddlings, and would go on playing for hours with serene composure, never tired and never impatient. Yet poor Clarence was not an accompanist to be coveted. He was weak in the ear and defective in science, but full

of a cheerful confidence which was as good as genius.

“Never mind, Miss Phœbe,” he would say cheerfully, when he had broken down for the twentieth time, “play on and I’ll catch you up.” He had thus a series of trysting places in every page or two, which might have been very laughable to an indifferent spectator, but which aggravated the Mays, father and son, to an intolerable extent. They were the two who suffered. As for Horace Northcote, who was not a great talker, it was a not disagreeable shield for his silent contemplation of Ursula, and the little things which from time to time he ventured to say to her. For conversation he had not the thirst which animated Reginald, and Ursula’s talk, though lively and natural, was not like Phœbe’s; but while the music went on he could sit by her in a state of silent beatitude, now and then saying something to which Ursula replied if she was disposed, or if she was not disposed put aside by a little shake of

her head, and smiling glance at the piano. Sometimes it was simple wilfulness that made her silent; but Northcote set it down to an angelical sweetness which would not wound even the worst of performances by inattention. They were happy enough sitting there under the shelter of the piano, the young man absorbed in the dreams of a young love, the girl just beginning to realize the adoration which she was receiving, with a timid perception of it—half frightened, half grateful. She was in spite of herself amused by the idea only half understood and which she could scarcely believe, that this big grown man, so much more important than herself in everybody's eyes, should show so much respect to a little girl whom her father scolded, whom Reginald sent trotting about on all sorts of errands, and whom Cousin Anne and Cousin Sophy considered a child. It was very strange, a thing to call forth inextinguishable laughter, and yet with a

strange touch of sweetness in it, which almost made her cry in wondering gratitude. What she thought of him, Ursula did not ask herself; that he should think *like this* of her was the bewildering extraordinary ridiculous fact that at present filled her girlish head.

But if they were sweet to Northcote, these evenings were the crown of Clarence Copperhead's content, and conscious success; he was supremely happy, caressing his fiddle between his cheek and his shoulder, and raising his pale eyes to the ceiling in an ecstasy. The music, and the audience, and the accompanist all together were delightful to him. He could have gone on he felt not only till midnight but till morning, and so on to midnight again, with short intervals for refreshment. Every ten minutes or so there occurred a break in the continuity of the strain, and a little dialogue between the performers.

"Ah, yes, I have missed a line; never mind; go on, Miss Phœbe, I will make up to you," he said.

“It is those accidentals that have been your ruin,” said Phœbe laughing, “it is a very hard passage, let us turn back and begin again,” and then the audience would laugh not very sweetly, and (some of them) make acrid observations; but the pianist was good-nature itself, and went back and counted and kept time with her head, and with her hand when she could take it from the piano, until she had triumphantly tided him over the bad passage, or they had come to the point of shipwreck again. During these labours, Phœbe who was really a good musician ought to have suffered horribly; but either she did not, or her good-nature was stronger than her good taste, for she went on serenely, sometimes for hours together, while her old and her young admirers sat secretly cursing (in such ways as are becoming to a clergyman) each in his corner. Perhaps she had a slight degree of pleasure in the evident power she had over father and son; but it was difficult fully to understand her views at this somewhat bewildering-

ing period of her life, in which she was left entirely to her own resources. She was herself groping a little through paths of uncertain footing, enjoying herself a great deal, but not seeing clearly where it led to, and having no definite purpose, or chart of those unknown countries in her mind.

“How you can go on,” said Reginald, on one of these occasions, having at length managed to seize upon and get her into a corner, “for hours, having your ears sacrificed and your patience tried by these fearful discords, and smile through it, is a mystery which I cannot fathom? If it was only consideration for your audience, that might be enough to move anyone—but yourself—”

“I don’t seem to feel it so very much myself.”

“And yet you are a musician!”

“Don’t be too hard upon me, Mr. May. I only play—a little. I am not like my cousins in the High Street, who are supposed to be very clever at music; and then

poor Mr. Copperhead is a very old friend."

"Poor Mr. Copperhead! poor us, you mean, who have to listen—and you, who choose to play."

"You are very vindictive," she said, with a piteous look. "Why should you be so vindictive? I do what I can to please my friends, and—there is no doubt about what poor Clarence likes best; if you were to show me as plainly what you would like—*quite* plainly, as he does——"

"Don't you know?" said Reginald, with glowing eyes. "Ah, well! if I may show you plainly—quite plainly, with the same results, you may be sure not to be left long in doubt. Talk to me! it is easier, and not so fatiguing. Here," said the young man, placing a chair for her; "he has had your patient services for two hours. Do only half as much for me."

"Ah! but talking is a different thing, and more—difficult—and more—personal.

“Well!” said Phœbe, with a laugh and a blush, taking the chair, “I will try, but you must begin; and I cannot promise, you know, for a whole hour.”

“After you have given that fellow two! and such a fellow! If it was Northcote, I might be equally jea—displeased, but I could understand it, for he is not a fool.”

“I think,” said Phœbe, looking towards the other end of the room, where Northcote was occupied as usual close to Ursula’s work-basket, “that Mr. Northcote manages to amuse himself very well without any help of mine.”

“Ah!” cried Reginald, startled; for of course it is needless to say that the idea of any special devotion to his little sister had never entered his mind. He felt disposed to laugh first when the idea was suggested to him, but he gave a second look, and fellow-feeling threw a certain enlightenment upon the subject. “That would never do,” he said gravely; “I wonder I never thought of it before.”

“Why would it not do? She is very nice, and he is clever and a rising man; and he is very well off; and you said just now he was not a fool.”

“Nevertheless it would never do,” said Reginald, opposing her pointedly, as he had never opposed her before; and he remained silent for a whole minute, looking across the room, during which long interval Phœbe sat demurely on the chair where he had placed her, looking at him with a smile on her face.

“Well?” she said at length, softly, “it was talk you said you wanted, Mr. May; but you are not so ready to tune up your violin as Mr. Copperhead, though I wait with my fingers on the piano, so to speak.”

“I beg your pardon!” he cried, and then their eyes met, and both laughed, though, as far as Reginald was concerned, in an embarrassed way.

“You perceive,” said Phœbe, rising, “that it is not nearly so easy to please

you, and that you don't know half so exactly what you want, as Clarence Copperhead does, though you abuse him, poor fellow. I have got something to say to Ursula; though, perhaps, she does not want me any more than you do."

"Don't give me up for one moment's distraction; and it was your fault, not mine, for suggesting such a startling idea."

Phœbe shook her head, and waved her hand as a parting salutation, and then went across the room to where Ursula was sitting, where Horace Northcote at least found her very much in his way. She began at once to talk low and earnestly on some subject so interesting that it absorbed both the girls in a way which was very surprising and unpleasant to the young men, neither of whom had been able to interest the one whose attention he was specially anxious to secure half so effectually. Northcote, from the other side of the table, and Reginald from the

other end of the room, gazed and gloomed with discomfited curiosity, wondering what it could be ; while Clarence strutted uneasily about the piano, taking up his fiddle now and then, striking a note, and screwing up his strings into concord, with many impatient glances. But still the girls talked. Was it about their dresses or some nonsense, or was it a more serious subject, which could thus be discussed without masculine help ? but this matter they never fathomed, nor have they found out till this hour. 4

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.





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